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"GOD FORGIVE MY ACT; BUT IT WAS HIS LIFE OR MINE," SHE GROANED, IN AGONY OF SPIRIT.

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The Jew Detective;

OR,

THE BEAUTIFUL CONVICT.

BY COLONEL PRENTISS INGRAHAM,
AUTHOR OF "MERLE, THE MUTINEER," "MONTE
CRISTO AFLOAT," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

AN EVENTFUL NIGHT.

"BROTHER, do not go to the village, please, but return with me to Oak Ridge Farm."

"No, sis, I will go on to the village, for I wish to see some of the fellows, and you are but a mile from Oak Ridge, and can easily go on alone, for it is not dark yet."

The two were brother and sister, and as near alike as two persons can be, excepting that the youth was slightly taller, and had broader shoulders than the maiden.

They were the twin children of a millionaire physician of New York city, who, a widower, and retired from practice, devoted his life to the happiness of his son and daughter.

Where the one, the daughter, had by her devotion more than repaid him for his love and care of her, the son had brought many a gray hair to mingle with the black locks on his father's head, by his wild and reckless life, until, at the age of seventeen, when presented to the reader, he was noted about town as a young profligate and spendthrift, for he squandered not only the liberal allowance he received from the doctor, but also a large portion of his sister's, and ran deeply in debt besides.

The two, when presented to the reader, sat upon their horses at the forks of a road leading through one of the most beautiful valleys in an Eastern State.

They were passing their vacation at Oak Ridge Farm, the old estate of their father, and where he had been born, and were returning at a gallop, after having spent the day with some friends, when they came to the forks of the road, one leading home, the other to the village, a couple of miles distant.

Here Frank Keene had drawn rein with the remark that he would go on to the village for an hour or so.

Cora knew well that this meant a carousal with the fast young men of the place and perhaps a night of gambling.

Their father had been called West to look after some property he had there, and she would be alone with the servants, so she urged upon her brother to accompany her home, for every time that he left her she dreaded evil might befall him.

As the two sat there in their saddles, reining in their spirited horses, they certainly were a very striking-looking couple, for the bold, manly face of Frank Keene was toned down to the beautiful in Cora, while her form was exquisitely molded.

They were both blondes, their hair a rich golden brown, being of the same hue, and their eyes as blue as indigo, large, expressive and full of intense feeling.

Both were dressed in riding-suits in the extreme of fashion, though Frank Keene rather leaned toward a sport in his love of jewelry.

Knowing that argument was useless, when her brother had made up his mind, Cora sighed, while the tears rose in her beautiful eyes, and she was about to ride on alone to Oak Ridge, when the thought struck her that Frank was armed.

Determined to remove from him the temptation to use a weapon, should occasion require it, she said:

"Brother, it is growing late, and it is not right to send me on alone to the farm; but I will go, if you will let me have the pistol you put in your pocket this morning."

"Take it, sis, for when I come home it will be with a rush, and I do not fear footpads," and a small, silver-mounted derringer was taken from his pistol-pocket and handed to his sister, who, after pleading with him not to remain long, rode on alone, her brother driving the spurs into his horse and dashing swiftly away, toward the village.

As he darted up to the tavern door of the little town, the swinging lamp, just lighted, revealed who he was to a group who sat upon the piazza, and his arrival was greeted with a loud cry:

"Hello, Keene! you are welcome."

Springing to the ground, he threw the rein to a stable-boy and stalked into the tavern, followed by his admirers, a group of fast youths, but not one of them being less than two years his senior.

Dressed in his riding-suit, erect as an Indian, haughty in bearing, rich and lavish with his money, the youth was a welcome visitor to the village, and his sycophants gathered around him, well knowing that wine would flow, and

they enjoy it, and then a game of cards would follow and they reap the benefit of it.

And wine did flow until brains grew dizzy, and then the party of young sports adjourned to an upper room of the tavern, and until midnight the shuffling of cards and chinking of gold, with an occasional ejaculation of delight, or a muttered oath of disappointment, broke the silence.

At last, dazed with wine, and a heavy loser to his pretended friends, Frank Keene descended to the stable-yard, mounted his horse and started for home.

His horse knew well the way, and had before borne his rider in safety, when he was too much dazed by drink to take care of himself, and, conscious of the helplessness of his master, he ambled slowly along until he had gotten into a copse of woods, some distance beyond the forks of the road, when suddenly, with a loud snort, he sprang to one side and Frank Keene was thrown heavily to the ground.

Away, in mad terror, the animal sped, his hoof-falls awaking loud echoes in the still night air, and startling the patiently-waiting stable-boy at Oak Ridge from a nap as he dashed up to the mansion.

"Oh Lordy! Massa Frank hain't on Brickbat," cried the negro, seizing the rein of the trembling horse.

Instantly, from an open window in a wing of the old mansion, came the cry:

"Tobey, do you mean it, that Master Frank has not come?"

"Yes, missy; Brickbat have comed, and looks skeert ter death, for he tremble like he had a chill, but Massa Frank hain't here," was the answer.

"Spring upon his back and return to see what is the matter, and I will send the carriage at once," cried Cora from the window, and Tobey instantly obeyed, mounting Brickbat and riding rapidly back toward the village, while the maiden, dreading evil of some kind, descended from her room and aroused the servants, at the same time ordering the carriage to be sent after her brother.

As she entered the library, after issuing her orders, it could be seen that she was fully dressed, a fact that showed she had not retired for the night.

Her face was white, and her lovely mouth wore a strangely stern expression for one so young.

With her hands clasped tightly before her, she paced to and fro, starting at every sound, and muttering every few moments:

"Oh! what a bitter night this has been to me!"

"Will I, can I ever face it from my memory?"

At last she started as the sound of hoofs broke upon her ear, and a moment after she met Tobey upon the back piazza, as he sprang from the back of Brickbat and ascended the steps.

"Well?"

Her voice was hoarse, and she could say no more.

"The carriage am coming, Missy Cora, with Massa Frank, for he done been thrown from his horse."

"And killed?" she gasped.

"Oh, no, missy; but hurted considerable; but I done stop and ask Doctor Travers to come over, and he be here right off."

A few moments more and Doctor Travers rode up and dismounted at the door.

He was met by Cora, white-faced and questioning.

"Do not be alarmed, Miss Cora, for Frank is not fatally injured, though seriously so," he said in his gentle, kindly way.

"Thank God!"

"It seems," continued the doctor, "that he was thrown from his horse, which then dashed on home, leaving Frank lying stunned in the road."

"There he was found by several young men returning from a serenading party, and Tobey coming up, they were bringing him home when they met the carriage, and he will soon be here, so do not feel alarmed."

Cora made no reply, but at once set to work to prepare Frank's room for his reception, while Doctor Travers patiently awaited his coming, leaning against a pillar of the piazza and calmly smoking a cigar, with that seeming indifference which physicians assume when even the most treasured lives are at stake.

But Austin Travers was by no means indifferent, for he knew that in his hands was the life of the son of a famous brother physician, and the brother of one whom he had learned to love with all the idolatry of his strong nature.

A young man of twenty-five, a country practitioner, living upon his small farm, which adjoined Oak Ridge with its half a thousand acres, he had met Cora Keene two years before, when he had come there to practice and bought his little home.

Girl though she was, he had been drawn toward her, and when each vacation she had returned to Oak Ridge, she had endeared herself more and more in the heart of the young doctor.

Starting from the reverie into which he had fallen, Doctor Travers advanced to the door of the carriage as it drew up before the piazza

steps, while from his lips broke the words that showed how desperate indeed was the condition of Frank Keene:

"Heaven grant he be not dead!"

CHAPTER II.

JUDAH, THE JEW.

In the dark shadows of a woodland, through which the highway ran that led by the farm of Oak Ridge, a man stood like a statue, his attitude that of one who listened to catch a sound that had seemingly startled him.

At his feet lay a dark object, hardly discernible in the gloom of night, rendered deeper by the overhanging branches of the trees, but which was nothing more than a human being, fallen all in a heap and lying motionless as death itself.

The sound which had attracted the attention of the man who stood over the prostrate form of a fellow-man, seemed to die away in the distance, for it reached his ears no more; but still he stood there, almost as motionless as the one who lay at his feet.

Certainly a tragedy had been enacted there in that dark woodland, and he now standing like a statue above the dead must have been the one who had struck the blow that laid a fellow-being dead in the roadway.

"Ah, me! I know not what to do," suddenly broke from his lips, and hardly had the words been uttered when suddenly there advanced almost upon him out of the shadow, the forms of half a dozen men.

In his deep reverie he had seemingly not heard their approach, though a while since he had been startled by their voices in the distance.

"Hold! or you are a dead man!"

The words rung out sternly, just as the one to whom they were addressed had turned, as though to bound away in flight; but he checked the impulse and, while an imprecation broke from his lips, muttered to himself:

"I must face my fate, be it what it may."

"Hands up, sir!" called out the same stern voice, and in reply came the words:

"Gentlemen, I have no desire to either take flight or resist, although I am sorry to be found under suspicious circumstances, for there lies at my feet here a dead man."

"We know that, sir, and arrest you as the murderer."

"Arrest me as the murderer?" came in tones of horror from the one accused.

"You heard my words, sir, and you are my prisoner, for we have, I may say, proof of your guilt."

"In your face I fling the lie, for I am as innocent of this crime you charge me with as you are," was the ringing response of the accused.

"That you will have to prove at your trial; but we are convinced of your guilt, and will see that you do not escape the penalty."

Like one transfixed with horror the man stood, raising no hand, moving not, as he was seized and securely bound, and then marched off toward the town between four of his captors, while two remained by the body of the dead man.

A walk of a couple of miles and the prisoner was taken to the village jail, the jailer aroused, and the iron door of a cell closed upon him with a clang that echoed dismally through his heart.

Alone, in the darkness of his little cell, his hands securely manacled, the man paced to and fro like an enraged lion in his cage.

To and fro, to and fro he walked, until the dawn broke and the sunlight pierced the narrow window and fell upon him.

Thus his face and form were revealed, and where the one was attractive-looking in the extreme, the other was of superb physique, and his bearing that of one who dared face his fellow-men without fear.

He was a Jew, for the stamp of his race, indelibly traced on the features of all of his blood, was there, though so toned down as not to be at first recognizable.

His hair was black and a silken mustache of the same hue shaded his upper lip, though it did not conceal wholly the resolute, expressive mouth, with its even rows of snowy teeth.

He was a young man, perhaps under twenty-six, though there was a certain look of conscious power in his face that made him appear older, while no one could have looked into his dark eyes and not felt their influence, amounting almost to magnetism.

Poorly, yet neatly dressed, and with a humble sachel lying on the little cot in his cell, and apparently containing his worldly wealth, he appeared like one who was not possessed of riches.

His hands and feet were small and shapely, and as his eyes fell upon the manacles encircling his wrists, a look of anguish swept over his face, and from his lips broke the words:

"Oh God of Abraham! that I should have come to this!"

Presently the door opened and a rough-looking man entered, and in his hand he bore a tray upon which were a cup of coffee, an egg and some bread.

"Here is your breakfast, though after your red work of last night, I shouldn't think you'd have much appetite," he said, rudely.

"You can take it away, for I care for nothing," the Jew answered, sternly.

"You know best, sir," said the jailer, with some respect in his tone, for there was that in the face and bearing of his prisoner that commanded it, and he turned away.

"One moment, please."

"Yes, sir," and the jailer hesitated.

"Who were my accusers last night?"

"Some of the young bloods of the village."

"And the man I am said to have murdered, who is he?"

"No one knows, for he is a stranger in these parts."

"I am to be tried for his murder?"

"Certain."

"When?"

"Court is sitting now, and I guess they'll make short work of your trial."

"And circumstantial evidence may hang me?"

"The evidence of your guilt is pretty plain, for the man was dead, you stood by the body, and the pistol you carried was a derringer, had no load in it, and the bullet it carries just fits the wound in the head of the murdered man."

"Still, with all this seeming proof against me, I am not guilty."

The jailer shook his head and said:

"That you'll have to prove at the trial, or—"

"Or what?" asked the Jew, as the man turned away.

"Hang," was the low, significant response, as the iron door closed upon the retreating form of the village jailer.

"My God! must I, Alvan Judah, die on the gallows?"

"No! no! no! it must not, *shall not* be, for those of my race never die at the hands of a hangman," and as he uttered the words there came over the Jew's face a look of firm resolve which showed that his mind was made up to some stern determination.

CHAPTER III.

A STRANGE RESOLVE.

WHEN Frank Keene, unconscious and limp, was borne into Oak Ridge Mansion, and placed upon his bed, Cora saw at a glance that he was more desperately hurt than Doctor Travers had wished her to believe.

But, young as she was, Cora Keene possessed a remarkable command over herself, and she set to work to do all in her power for the erring brother whom she so devotedly loved.

Doctor Travers, when he got his patient in his hands, began at once to make a full examination of his injuries, for when he had seen him lying in the roadway he had been unable to more than glance hastily at the youth and advise his being sent home with all dispatch.

"A broken arm," he muttered, as he went carefully over the prostrate form in his examination.

"A gash over the temple, but no fracture of the skull—yes, and a couple of ribs broken—these are all, thank Heaven, excepting some bruises and cuts."

"He will live then?"

The doctor started, for he had not heard Cora come into the room.

"Yes, I shall devote my whole attention to him, Miss Cora, and there is every hope he will pull through all right."

"But he remains unconscious so long."

"That is the effect of concussion and the shock."

"I will soon revive him."

"And my father?"

"He is West, I believe?"

"He is in Texas; but I can telegraph for him."

"No, for it will only worry him, and, as you know, Miss Cora, your father suffers from an affection of the heart, and the shock might kill him, for his life seems wrapped up in Frank."

"As mine is also, Doctor Travers; but I leave him in your hands, for I feel confident that you will save his life."

"I will do all in my power, Miss Cora—for your sake," he added, in a low, earnest tone.

But Cora had glided from the room, and the doctor was alone with his patient.

Gazing upon him an instant in deep thought, he murmured:

"Oh, that he were different!"

"How strange that he, so like his beautiful sister, should be so wild and reckless in his life, and far better would it be for him now to die than to live and bring dishonor and sorrow upon those who love him, as he certainly will do."

"Yes, it would be better that he died, and time would heal the wounds his death made in the hearts of his sister and father, while living, he will bow their heads in shame, I fear."

"But I pledged myself to save him, and if man can do it I will, for her sake, though he is desperately hurt."

A servant now entered and the doctor set to his task with a will.

The broken arm and ribs were set, the cuts and bruises were dressed, and the patient made as comfortable as was possible, though he still lay in a state of coma, and whether it would end in death, who could know?

Thus the night passed away, and still the faith-

ful physician remained at his post of duty, until at last he told Cora, who stole into the room, that the crisis was past and that her brother would live, though he must have the most devoted care and perfect quiet.

"I will take care of him myself," replied the noble girl, and most faithfully she kept her word, hardly leaving his bedside day or night, and then only doing so when almost commanded by Doctor Travers to seek repose.

As Frank Keene grew better he became peevish and found fault with everybody and everything, but Cora bore his ill-humor meekly, until one day he was so unkind toward her that she called a servant to remain with him while she ordered her horse for a gallop of a few miles, for she felt that she needed exercise.

As she turned into the road from the Oak Ridge gateway she met Doctor Travers, also upon horseback.

His face brightened as he saw her, for he had come to love her far more through her devotion to her brother, and he said, cheerily:

"Good-morning, Miss Cora; I am delighted to see you out on horseback, for you have been so devoted a nurse that I have been anxious regarding you."

"I came for a gallop, and will be glad to have company, Doctor Travers, if you care to join me."

"Gladly; but how is Frank?"

"As cross as a bear," she answered, pouting her full, red lips.

"A good sign; but which way shall we ride?"

"I wished to see the spot where Frank was thrown."

"I will ride there with you; but has he said anything to you regarding his experience that night?"

"How do you mean, Doctor Travers?"

"He was returning from the village, I believe?"

"Yes, and you infer that he had been drinking?" she said, frankly.

"Yes, I know that he had."

"True, and he was not himself; but he seems to remember that some one sprung for his bridle-rein, and his horse darting to one side threw him to the ground."

"Does he remember aught else?"

"No, or if he does, he will say no more upon the subject."

"Are you aware that he was robbed?"

"Ah! I remember now that he wears no jewelry, his watch, shirt-studs and rings being gone, but I had half-feared that—"

Here Cora paused, and her face flushed, and the doctor asked:

"What did you fear, Miss Cora?"

"To be frank with you, Doctor Travers, I feared he had gambled heavily, and left his watch and jewelry as security for his losses, as I am sorry to say poor Frank has often done before."

"Did you notice that there were scratches upon his left-hand little finger, where he wore a diamond?"

"Yes; I did notice this, now that you speak of it."

"That proves that the ring, which was small for him, had been torn off in haste; in fact, Miss Cora, your brother was attacked that night and robbed."

"Indeed! but by whom?"

"That I wish now to make known to you, for it is certain that he was not the only victim that night."

"What can you mean, Doctor Travers?" asked Cora, while her face turned deadly pale.

They had now reached the copse of woods through which the road ran, and the doctor drew rein upon the spot where Frank Keene had been thrown from his horse.

"I have not before told you, Miss Cora, that there has been considerable excitement in the village of late, regarding a tragedy that occurred the night your brother was thrown, for I felt that you had trouble enough at home, and I told the servants not to speak to you upon the subject."

"The fact is that here is where a footpad sprung out to attack your brother, and when he was thrown and stunned, he was robbed by the wretch whose act so nearly cost him his life."

"And who was his assailant?" asked Cora, in a voice that quivered with emotion.

"A Jew."

"A Jew rob a man on the highway?"

"This is not the character of that people, Doctor Travers," said Cora.

"True; but there are exceptions to all rules, Miss Cora, and this Jew is the exception to his people, though I confess he does not look like either an assassin or a highwayman, for a more noble specimen of manhood I never saw."

"You have seen him, then?"

"Yes; for I went to court this morning where he is on trial."

"On trial for robbing my brother?"

"Miss Cora, there is a far worse charge against him."

"Indeed?"

"Yes; for on yonder spot, not a hundred yards from where your brother was assailed, at the

foot of that large tree, a dead man was found upon the very spot where Frank was hurt."

Cora uttered no word of surprise, but bent her face low, as though half-stunned by the news, and the doctor continued:

"It seems that the Jew, gentleman though he appears, was tramping along this road, and he not only attacked your brother, to rob him, and did so, while he lay unconscious at his feet, but he also shot and killed another person, firing upon him evidently from behind yonder tree."

"And they caught the man who did this?" asked Cora, in a voice that was hardly audible.

"Yes, he was found standing over the body of the man he had slain, and at his feet was a handkerchief containing your brother's watch, jewelry and pocket-book, so he was arrested, thrown into jail, and is now on trial, and my word for it he will be hanged, for the evidence of his guilt is conclusive."

"Doctor Travers, I must go to that trial."

"Come, you must go with me," cried Cora, in a voice that fairly rung in its earnestness.

"No, Miss Cora, for—"

"I will hear no argument against it, Doctor Travers, for I will go and at once, and if you will not accompany me I will go alone."

Doctor Travers was astounded at the excitement of the girl.

"Has her long siege of nursing her brother turned her mind?" he muttered.

But Cora was not to be put off, and said almost angrily:

"Come, sir, will you go with me, in the absence of my father and brother to escort me, or shall I go alone?"

"I will go with you, of course, Miss Cora, but—"

"Then come, for there is no time to lose," and she dashed away at a swift gallop, leaving Austin Travers but one thing to do, and that was to put spurs to his horse and follow her.

CHAPTER IV.

CORA'S CONFESSION.

ALVAN JUDAH was a brave man; but in prison in a strange place, with no friend near, no one to call upon for aid, he felt that fortune was against him.

"I have no money, and I have no friends, so why need I send for a lawyer?"

"No, I will tell my story as it is, and if they do not believe me I cannot help it, and I must take the consequences, and I will and bravely, too, for I am no coward."

So he thought aloud as he paced his little cell the night before his day of trial.

The jailer had told him that all felt that he was guilty, and advised him to get a lawyer; but Alvan Judah had told him that he had no money to pay one.

"Then send for your friends," suggested the jailer.

"I have no friends," was the sad reply.

"You are in a bad way then."

"Yes, I am only a poor Jew, with no home, no money, and no friends," and the tone in which this was said touched even the hard heart of the jailer, accustomed daily to scenes of woe and wretchedness.

So desperate was the situation of the Jew considered that none of the young lawyers would offer to take his case and thus link their names with a failure when starting upon their career.

At last the day came round when the trial was to be held, and in irons, and accompanied by two constables, Alvan Judah was taken to the court-house.

He was pale, but firm, and his fine face seemed to create an impression in his favor as he was placed in the prisoner's dock.

Calmly he glanced over the court-room, his eyes falling an instant upon the stern judge, then resting upon the faces of the jury, one by one, the men who held his life in their hands, and then his gaze swept over the crowd who had come to see him tried for murder.

Not one face did he see that was friendly to him.

The court being opened, the prisoner was asked who was his lawyer.

"I have no legal adviser, your honor," was the reply, delivered in a deep, rich-toned voice that reached every ear in the crowded court-room.

"Do you wish the court to appoint a lawyer to defend you?" asked the judge, gazing with increased interest upon the prisoner.

"I am too poor, your honor, to pay for legal services, so will defend myself, with the court's permission, my profession being that of an attorney."

At this a murmur ran around the room, and the court granting permission for the prisoner to be his own attorney, the trial began.

Most attentively did Alvan Judah listen to the charges against him, made by the half-dozen young men who had been his captors.

He heard one of them tell the story of how they had been out to a farm-house serenading, and returning, at the forks of the road, their vehicle had broken down, and one of their number had started for the nearest house for aid.

Suddenly, while walking through the woodland, he had beheld a man some distance before him, and feeling that his actions were suspicious,

he had returned for his comrades and they had crept up to the spot and discovered the prisoner standing over the body of a dead man.

Upon seeing them he had started to escape, but evidently realizing the impossibility of doing so, he had quietly submitted to arrest.

The dead man none of the party recognized, but he had evidently been robbed, and by his side they found a handkerchief tied up at the four corners, and containing a gold watch and chain, a diamond and a seal ring, some diamond shirt-studs, a pair of valuable sleeve-buttons and a pocket-book in which were some forty dollars in bank-notes.

This handkerchief was silk and had embroidered in one corner the initials,

"D. D."

The valuables were known to belong to Frank Keene, but the handkerchief was not his and an owner for it could not be found.

The testimony went on to show that the prisoner had evidently first halted Frank Keene, causing his horse to throw him, and then robbed him, and afterward, before he had gotten far from the spot, had either been discovered in his act, or come upon the murdered man, and to cover up his tracks, or again for the purpose of robbery, had taken the life of the deceased.

He certainly had been found by the dead body, and at his feet was the handkerchief containing the valuables of Frank Keene, which he had dropped there to search the body.

Whether the dead man had been robbed of anything or not, was not known, as nothing of value was found upon the prisoner, other than a purse in which were some twenty dollars, a seal ring, a silver watch and a derringer pistol, which was unloaded and showed that it had been lately discharged.

This weapon had the initials A. J. upon it, which accorded with what the Jew stated his name to be, and the death-wound in the forehead of the dead man had been made with a bullet which exactly fitted the prisoner's pistol.

In the little sachel of the Jew only a few changes of clothing had been found, with nothing else of a suspicious nature to show that he had committed other robberies.

After several of the party had taken the prisoner to jail, those left to watch the body, had discovered the prostrate form of Frank Keene lying further on in the road, and at first believed him to be dead; but just then Tobey, the negro coachman of Oak Ridge Farm had dashed up, mounted upon his young master's horse, and the youth had been soon after removed to his home, and had been since too ill, the doctor had stated, to make any report of what had happened.

Still, the testimony of Frank Keene had not been considered necessary, especially as Doctor Travers had stated the youth had not been in a condition to know what had occurred and the far graver charge of murder, not robbery, was the one the Jew was to be tried for.

Such was the testimony of the witnesses against Alvan Judah, and that he was guilty not one in the court-room doubted.

When he arose to address the court in his own behalf, he glanced fearlessly around upon all, and towered up to his full height, presenting a striking and commanding appearance.

In his sonorous voice, that reached every part of the court-room, Alvan Judah told his story, one of bitter trials and sorrow:

He was the son of wealthy parents, and had been born in a Southern State, he said; but just as he had been admitted to the bar as a lawyer, his father's health had failed him, and being ordered to Mexico by his physician, he had accompanied him thither, as it was the duty of a filial son to do.

There his father had entered into speculations which had swamped his fortune and this had broken his life wholly, so that soon after he died and found a grave in a foreign land.

Soon after his mother had followed his father to the grave, and alone and in poverty Alvan Judah had returned to the United States to try and build up a name and fortune for himself.

He had taken passage on a schooner bound from Vera Cruz to Boston, and his finances being low had set out on foot for New York.

On account of the hot summer days he walked by night, and thus had come upon the body of the dead man lying in the roadway under the shadow of the overhanging trees.

He had stumbled over the body, and then had examined it closely to see if the man was dead.

He had found the wound in the forehead, and this told him foul play had been done.

The handkerchief, with its valuables, he had found by the side of the body, and he had thought he had heard the sound of some one running away from the spot, though this might have been imagination.

In conclusion Alvan Judah said, while the court-room was as still as death:

"Gentlemen of the jury, I confess to you, with deep shame, that I was sorely tempted in my poverty, to take that handkerchief of valuables, well-knowing that they would keep me from want in the large city to which I was going, until I could obtain work.

"But while I stood there, the tempter urging

me to take them and hasten on, my good angel came to me and warned me not to fall a victim to temptation, and I had just decided to go on my way and make known at the first farm-house the discovery I had made, when those gentlemen, who are swearing away my life as witnesses against me, came suddenly upon me, and I was caught in a situation that may hang me.

"As to the young gentleman who was found lying prostrate further along the road, I know nothing, and, so help me the God of Abraham, and the God of the Christians, I have told the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

A sigh ran through the listeners, as Alvan Judah sat down, his eyes fixed fearlessly upon the jury; but still, though his words and bearing had made a deep impression upon all, it was easy to see that he was still believed guilty, and the judge so charged in his address to the twelve men who held the prisoner's life in their keeping.

Without leaving their seats they glanced at each other, and reading in each face the thoughts thereon impressed, by mutual consent they came to an agreement, and so the foreman stated when asked by the court:

"Gentlemen of the jury, have you decided upon a verdict?" came the ominous question.

"We have," was the deep response of the foreman.

Alvan Judah faced the jury with a face that showed no atom of fear, and there was no tremor in the hand that lay upon the table before him.

"What say you, gentlemen of the jury, do you find the prisoner guilty or not guilty?"

A stillness, such as haunts a tomb, was in the room, as all awaited the reply.

A moment of deep suspense, and then one word broke the silence.

It was:

"Guilty!"

Every eye was upon the face of the prisoner; but it did not blanch, nor did the firm lips quiver.

Whatever his emotions, Alvan Judah had nerves of iron and showed no emotion whatever when brought face to face with his cruel fate.

"What have you to say, prisoner, why the extreme penalty of the law should not be passed upon you for the crime of which you have been found guilty?"

"I have only to say, your Honor, that circumstantial evidence condemns me to die an ignominious death for a crime of which I am not guilty," came in the unflinching voice of the Jew.

"Prisoner, rise and receive sentence!"

Instantly Alvan Judah arose, the chains upon his ankles clanking dismally, as he turned and faced the man who was to pronounce his fearful doom.

An instant of painful silence, and then the lips of the stern old judge parted to pass the sentence, when suddenly there was a commotion in the rear of the court-room and a slender form glided rapidly down the aisle and confronted the judge, while there rung out in thrilling tones:

"Hold there, judge! Condemn not an innocent man to death, for I, not that Jew, am the guilty one!"

CHAPTER V.

A CONVICT LOVER.

AFTER the startling confession which Cora Keene made before the court, that she, and not Alvan Judah, had killed the man found dead in the woodland road, it would be well to go back to the time when she parted company with her brother when he left her to go to the village.

It was with a sad heart that Cora rode homeward, allowing her horse to go in a walk, while she was lost in deep meditation.

She began to dread that evil must sooner or later follow the course which her brother was taking, and regretted deeply that neither her father or herself could win him away from the wicked path he had chosen to lead.

"Ah, me! the one who led poor Frank into this evil life was Macy Belden, the man who won my girl heart, and whom I once believed I loved.

"Was it revenge because I cast him off three years ago, that made him tempt Frank until he fell? If so, you have been avenged, Macy Belden."

Unconsciously she had spoken aloud, and riding along with her eyes cast downward, she had not seen the form of a man standing close to a large tree that grew by the roadside.

As she uttered the name of the one upon whom her thoughts were turning, the man stepped out and confronted her, while he laid his hand upon her bridle-rein, at the same time saying:

"My name on your sweet lips, fair Cora?"

"Macy Belden!" gasped the maiden, turning white at the sight of one before her whom she did not dream to be near.

"Yes, your old lover, sweet Cora, who has escaped from prison, and, living only in the sunlight of your eyes, has come here to see you once more," he said, with something of a sneer in his tones.

"Macy Belden, I had hoped that our paths in life had divided forever."

"Yet you see you were wrong, for they have come together again."

There was mischief in the man's look and manner.

He was tall, well-formed, about thirty years of age, with a refined face and courtly manners. He was well-dressed, yet had the appearance of one who had been ill, for his complexion was very white, and his face was bloodless.

"Remove your hand from my rein, Mr. Belden, and permit me to go on my way," sternly commanded Cora.

"Not until you have heard what I have to say, Cora Keene," and there was a threat in the words.

"Well, sir, be quick in what you would say, for it is growing late and I wish to return home."

"Time was, Cora, when you were fond of my society."

"That was when I was a mere child, and before I knew that the man that I admired was a—"

She paused, and he continued with a sneer:

"A thief, you would have said."

"Well, so be it, for I did steal when luck went against me, and I went to prison for my crime, and only escaped ten days ago; but, Cora Keene, when I asked you, three years ago, girl though you were, to one day be my wife, and you scorned me, I swore to be avenged, and I have been, for I led your brother on the path which will carry him to ruin."

"I scorned you then, for my eyes were opened to your evil life, and you do I hold responsible for the life which my poor brother leads to-day," said Cora, angrily.

"Ha! ha! ha! your anger but heightens your beauty, sweet Cora, and how wondrously beautiful you have grown in the year that I have been cursing and fretting in a prison. But where is my rival, Dick Denver, for I could learn nothing of him when I visited the city?"

"Like yourself, he also went to the bad," was the stinging reply of the young girl.

"So be it, we are fellow-unfortunates then; but what was Dick Denver's crime?"

"He forged his uncle's name to a check, and had to fly to save himself from following you to prison."

"Ah! he was more fortunate than I; but there will be a trio of us, if I do not receive what I came here for."

There was something of such meaning in his words and look that involuntarily Cora shuddered; but she asked firmly:

"What do you mean, Mr. Belden?"

"I mean, sweet Cora, that I find it necessary to go to Texas, or some other State where I am not a hunted man, and to get there, and start in business, I need gold, and that is what I have come here for."

"And why come here?"

"Your father is a very wealthy man, Cora Keene."

"What have you to do with his riches, may I ask?"

"I expect to help him spend some of his gold," was the strangely significant response.

"Ha! do you intend to rob my father's home?" cried Cora, in surprise.

"No, but as I hold a secret that will send your brother to prison, I intend to get pay for keeping my mouth shut, or sell it to those who will pay for it."

Cora turned deadly pale, for this was a direct charge that her brother was not only wild and a spendthrift, but a criminal as well.

She knew that he had kept up his association with Macy Belden long after the character of the man had been known, and also that he had urged his father to allow him to go West at the time Macy Belden was arrested for defaulting.

Could it be that Frank was really in the power of this bad man?

It certainly seemed so from his words, and Cora's heart sunk within her at the thought.

But her brave spirit did not flinch, and she said firmly:

"Your words imply that my brother is guilty of crime."

"He is."

"I do not believe it."

"I have the proofs here in my pocket," and he took out a package of papers.

"Granted that you speak the truth: do you wish to sell your secret?"

"I do."

"At what price?"

"My price is a large one, because I know that your father is able to pay it."

"Name it."

"Twenty thousand dollars."

"Had you said a small sum, I might, in my girlish innocence of what power you hold in possessing the secret you allege you have, been willing to pay you; but my father will not give one dollar to you, for never can you make him believe that his son is guilty of a crime, and, if he has so dishonored himself, he will cast him off utterly and let him take the punishment he deserves."

The eyes of Cora Keene flashed as she spoke, and the man quailed beneath her just indignation; but his was a vicious nature, and seeing that he was thwarted, he said savagely:

"Girl, I am a hunted man, and have no time

to stand here parleying with you, while I believe that you will betray me and have the hounds of the law upon my track, to run me down and take me back to that living tomb.

"No, no; I will not go back, nor will I hang for the murder of the keeper who barred my way.

"You wear jewels worth a small fortune, as I know, and more, I will close your mouth forever!

"*Ay, I will have your life, Cora Keene, and your jewels will bring me gold to aid me in my escape!*"

CHAPTER VI.

BY A WOMAN'S HAND.

As Macy Belden uttered the savage words, he drew from his breast a long-bladed knife, and throwing the bridle-rein over his arm, clutched Cora by the wrist with a force that nearly drew her from her saddle.

One glance into the face of the now frenzied and desperate man, and Cora Keene realized fully that he meant every word of his threat.

He was indeed a hunted man; his love for her had turned to bitter hatred, even though his own acts had caused her to look upon him with scorn.

He had suffered bitterly in a prison cell, and, having made his escape at the cost of a keeper's life, he knew that there would be but one fate for him were he retaken.

The girl's fearlessness had thrown him off his guard, for he had hoped to frighten both her father and herself into giving him gold; but he saw that he could not frighten her, and well knew that he dared not remain longer there, should he let her go free.

Thus, driven to bay, he had made up his mind to kill her.

A superb *solitaire* which he knew Cora wore, left her by her mother, he was well aware would bring him a couple of thousand dollars, while a pair of diamond ear-rings which her father had given her upon her sixteenth birthday, he felt would bring him half as much more.

He had but little money in his purse, but with what the jewels would fetch, he knew that he was safe.

Thus he argued in the quickness of a flash, and arguing, he at once determined to act.

But for the presence of mind of the girl, and her strength, he would have dragged her at once from the saddle, and her death would have been sudden and sure.

But, though taken by surprise, Cora did not faint, nor utter a cry of alarm, but acted, and that act was to draw from her pocket the little revolver she had coaxed from her brother.

Like a flash it had come to her that she had the weapon, and she drew it, not to use it, but to frighten off her assailant.

"Unhand me, Macy Belden, or I will shoot you," she cried, sternly, and she turned the muzzle of the revolver into his face.

A curse broke from his lips, and he started back, just as he was about to strike at her heart with his knife; but recovering himself quickly, he said rudely:

"Bah! girl, you cannot frighten me with that toy. No, I will have your life!"

Again he raised his knife, and was in the act of making a savage blow, when the gathering darkness was illuminated with a flash, a sharp report rung out, and staggering backward, the man sunk in his tracks.

At the same moment the maiden's horse bounded forward in fright.

"God forgive my act; but it was his life or mine," she groaned, in agony of spirit, and then, seizing her reins, which were flying loosely upon the neck of the running horse, she drew him to a halt, and wheeling him to the rightabout started back down the road.

"I must have those papers which he had," she muttered, and forcing her horse up to the prostrate form she sprung to the ground, thrust her hand into his pocket and drew out the package.

Leaping into her saddle with the utmost ease, she allowed her horse full rein, and like the very wind the animal sped homeward, drawing up at the gate covered with foam.

Springing to the ground Cora turned to Tobey, who met her, and controlling her emotion with a great effort, she said:

"Tobey, Master Frank may not be home until late, so you had better wait up for him."

"Yes, missy," answered Tobey, and Cora swept on into the house and sought her room.

The lamps were already lighted and the curtains drawn, so she sat down, still in her riding-habit, and glanced at the papers she had taken from Macy Belden.

They were notes of hand for various amounts, and several official-looking documents that were signed by parties whom she knew.

Upon the backs of each one of them was written, in the hand-writing of Macy Belden, which she knew well, these words:

"A forgery—Frank Keene forged this. Redeemed by Macy Belden."

They all bore dates prior to Macy Belden's incarceration in prison.

"My God! has my poor, sinful brother fallen so low as this?" groaned Cora, and her head

drooped upon the table by which she sat and she seemed almost wholly overcome.

At last she raised her face and it was white as though life had left her.

"Thank God I have these papers," she said slowly, and in a voice scarcely louder than a whisper.

Then she continued in the same constrained tones:

"I cannot, I will not tell of that meeting to-night. No, no; it shall be my secret, and keep it I shall until my dying day. If I killed him, it was to save my life, and more, I have saved my brother from prison, and the honor of our name. It would kill my poor father to know all, so I will not tell that fearful secret; but I will use these papers against poor Frank, to try and force him to mend his ways.

"Now to live a lie before the world, to wear a cheerful face when the heart aches with sorrow; but it is for those that I love, and I can bear all, can suffer and be strong."

With this brave resolve the noble girl arose, dressed herself for tea, and descending from her room sat down to her lonely repast, pale, yet perfectly calm, and even cheerful before the servant who waited upon her.

After tea she went into the parlor and drummed upon the piano to drown thought. Then she sung some sad ballad, and this making her feel more wretched, she tried to read, but soon gave this up and went to her room to pace the floor in deep and painful reverie until she was alarmed by the rapid hoof-strokes of her brother's horse coming up the road leading to the house.

What then followed the reader well knows, as well, also, that the days went by, and so well did she keep her dread secret that she did not even ask if any tragedy had occurred in the neighborhood.

CHAPTER VII.

SAVED FROM THE GALLOWS.

WHEN Cora Keene entered the court-room as she did, her presence created an excitement which the gavel of the judge found it hard to allay, and the crier in vain tried to suppress the hum of voices.

She had ridden breathlessly to the village, with Doctor Travers as her escort, and not one word could he get from her on the way of what was her intention.

Upon arriving she had sprung unaided from her horse, and a court official in the hallway, when she made inquiry, had told her that the Jew had been found guilty, and the judge was about to pass the death-sentence upon him.

Shaking off Austin Travers, who would have restrained her, she swept down the aisle with a swift, firm step, her long riding-skirt trailing behind her, and her face, flushed by her ride and excitement, full of stern resolve.

As she uttered the words that startled the gathered crowd, and made the dignified judge spring from his judicial bench in amazement, every eye was upon her, and she presented a superb picture as she stood there defiantly before that excited body of people.

At last a silence fell upon all, and then the judge said, in slow, measured tones, but in a kindly way:

"My dear young lady, this is a strange charge you make against yourself."

"It is a true one, your Honor, for I, not that—" she paused, for she had almost said *Jew*, believing that the man under trial was some poor Hebrew tramp; but when her eyes fell upon the prisoner, and she beheld his superb presence, she had to glance again at his manacles before she could realize that such a man could be considered a murderer, and emphasizing the one word, she continued:

"I, not that gentleman, killed the man found dead by the roadside, and for whose murder, as you called it, you had nearly sentenced an innocent man to die upon the gallows."

"I am utterly in the dark, young lady, until you fully explain, so I pray that you do so at once."

"I will do so, your Honor, though I had hoped to keep the secret to myself, as, by my act, I was placed in a most unfortunate position for a young lady, and I sought to keep from appearing as a heroine and having my name bruited about as one who had taken human life."

"But the peril in which that gentleman is placed through my act, causes me to sacrifice my own feelings in the matter, so I will tell you frankly that, upon the night of the death of the one whom you so nearly sentenced an innocent man to the gallows for killing, I parted with my brother at the Forks of the Road, he coming on to this village, while I rode homeward to Oak Ridge Farm."

"Knowing that my brother might meet convivial friends, and that he was armed, I refused to go on home alone, as it was after sunset, unless he gave me up his pistol."

"This he did, and, before reaching the woodland, my bridle-rein was seized by a man who demanded money of me."

"I had no money with me to give him, and then he demanded my jewels under penalty of death,

"I saw that he was desperate, and, when he sought to drag me from my horse, at the same time raising a long knife which he carried, I thought of my brother's little revolver, and drawing it, demanded that he release me."

"The sight of the weapon infuriated him the more, and seeing that I had to act quickly, for it was his life or mine, I fired in his face and he dropped dead before me."

"My horse, in alarm, bounded away, and ran home with me; but, for the reasons that I have stated, I kept the secret to myself."

"Some hours after, my poor brother was brought home seriously hurt, and in watching by his bedside I have not, until to-day, heard that another had been arrested and was on trial for my act, while I dared not ask if a body had been found in the woodland."

"Learning, only an hour since, of the danger that this gentleman was in, I rode hither in all haste to tell my story, to make my confession, and demand that the innocent be not punished for the guilty."

Through all Cora told her story in a clear voice that did not quiver, and every word she uttered was listened to with breathless interest, while Alvan Judah did not take his eyes off her face.

When she concluded, the judge said:

"Miss Keene, this is a most remarkable confession, and I am glad that you make it just in time to save this poor man, whom, now knowing to be innocent of the charge of murder, I can believe as to his story regarding the finding of your brother's watch and other valuables by the side of the dead man, and which proves that there must have been another person upon the scene, whom the coming of Mr. Judah frightened off."

"Your story shows that the dead man was slain shortly after sunset, and your brother was not thrown from his horse until after midnight, so that Mr. Judah, discovered by the side of the dead man, and coming from a direction that brought him to the body first, could not have seen your brother at all, as he asserts."

"Under the circumstances therefore, of his having been tried for his life, I hereby discharge him."

"Prisoner, you are discharged! Sheriff, take those irons off Mr. Judah, and permit him to become a free man once more."

Instantly Alvan Judah arose to his feet, and said earnestly:

"I thank your Honor with all my heart; but I hope the young lady is not to be held, for rather would I suffer than have such the case."

"No, Miss Keene simply did her duty, in killing one who sought her life and to rob her, and I honor her for the courage she has shown, though I regret that she deemed it her duty to keep the act a secret."

"There is no charge against you, Miss Keene, and you too are free to go."

A wild shout broke from the assembled crowd at these words of the judge; in vain did the crier and the gavel seek to command silence, while in the confusion that followed Alvan Judah left the court, and, a moment after, Doctor Travers led Cora out, and aiding her to her saddle, the two started for Oak Ridge at a rapid gallop, the young physician not being able to get the maiden to utter a word during their ride there, so wrapt up was she in her own meditations.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE JEW'S THEORY.

ONCE outside the court-house walls, where he had been so near death, Alvan Judah gave a long breath of relief.

He had faced the ordeal with a bearing which had won the admiration of judge, jury and spectators, for not once had he shown one atom of fear.

Through Cora Keene he had escaped the gallows, and, though he had uttered no word of thanks to her, he certainly appreciated what she had done for him.

About him, as he stood in the broad glare of day, a curious crowd was gathered watching him closely.

But he had been so lately the cynosure of all eyes, that he hardly noticed that he was being stared at, until a kindly-faced man came up to him and said:

"Stranger, I am glad you got off, for I admired your nerve, and I want to ask you to come over and stop with me as long as you stay in town."

"I keep the tavern across the square yonder."

"I thank you, sir; but my means are limited, and I think I shall hasten on to New York."

"Now, my friend, a tavern landlord don't mean pay when he gives an invitation, and I want you to be my guest, so come right along, for you need rest and food."

"I thank you, landlord, and will accept your invitation for a short time; but I must go to the jail after my traps, although they are of little value."

"I'll send after them, for after the ordeal you have passed through you don't wish to go into those grim walls again."

"The jailer was kind to me, and I wish to thank him."

"Well, you are a man clean through, and I'll

go with you, though I hate to go behind stone walls that hide only misery," and the kind-hearted Boniface took Alvan Judah's arm and led him toward the jail.

Securing his cane and sachel, and thanking the jailer, the young Hebrew accompanied Landlord Loring of the New England Arms, as his tavern was called, and soon found himself in the best room in the house.

"This is the room I keep for judges, congressmen and governors when they come to town, Mr. Judah; but you are welcome as long as you will occupy it, for I never saw a man that won my admiration as you did, and I verily believe if they had got the hemp about your neck, you'd have never shown fear.

"Make yourself at home, sir, and I'll send your dinner up to you, for the dining-room will be crowded to-day with a curious gang who only wish to see you."

With this Landlord Loring departed, and Alvan Judah was left alone.

For a long time he sat motionless, his thoughts so deep that he seemed to almost forget that he had the power of movement.

Then he started, arose, and paced to and fro until the landlord entered, accompanied by a servant bearing a tray.

It was a most tempting dinner that the landlord served him, for the New England Arms was noted for its good table, comfortable beds and neat rooms, and Alvan Judah ate with a relish which he had not known for many a long day.

The landlord kept him company the while, helping him to drink a bottle of good claret, and running on with a general conversation about the town and its people, and how all agreed that they had never seen a braver man than Alvan Judah.

"May I ask you regarding the young lady who saved my life?" said Alvan Judah, calmly.

"Miss Cora Keene is her name, and her father is a great doctor, but he does not practice now.

"He was born on Oak Ridge Farm, some four miles from here, and one of the finest places in the State.

"He lives in the city of New York, but comes up here every June and stays until autumn, and is very rich, though they do say that his son Frank, although a boy in years, has made a big hole in his fortune by gambling and dissipation.

"As for the girl, Miss Cora, she was born an angel and will die one, for she is as lovely in character as she is beautiful in face, and you saw for yourself how lovely she is."

"Yes, she is exquisitely beautiful."

"She knows every poor family within ten miles, and I can tell you that much that is raised on the Oak Ridge Farm goes to those who need it; but it was wrong in her, not telling about having to kill that tramp."

"I suppose, as she said, she wished to avoid publicity."

"True, Mr. Judah, and she is just the girl to shrink from that sort of thing; but then she had to carry a big secret on her mind.

"Still, she had the pluck to kill him, and then the nerve to come right up and face the consequences when she saw your neck was in the noose on account of it."

"Landlord, can I trust you?" suddenly asked Alvan Judah.

"You can, sir, with your life," was the earnest reply.

"You heard my story of my life, as I told it in court, and, from many scenes that I was forced to go through in Mexico, I have come to the conclusion that I am a natural-born detective."

"Indeed, sir?"

"Yes, and I studied law from a love of getting into the intricacies of difficult cases, and at one time did some valuable detective work for the Mexican Government."

Landlord Loring looked at his guest, not understanding just what this was leading to, and after a while said:

"You had better remain in our village then, sir, and hang out your shingle as an attorney."

"No, for New York is a field that will suit me better; but let me return to the subject that I intended to speak to you upon.

"Did you notice at the trial that the physician, Doctor Travers, I believe, who made the *post-mortem* examination of the dead man's body, took from the head a bullet that just fitted my pistol?"

"I did, sir, and it seemed a clear case against you."

"Yes, for the pistol I had was a derringer, and carries, as you see, a large bullet," and Alvan Judah exhibited the weapon to the landlord.

"Now, at the trial," he continued, "I was not asked how my pistol came to be unloaded, although it showed traces of having been lately discharged.

"Nor did I tell why I had fired it.

"The truth I wish to now tell you."

"You can trust me sir."

"I feel that I can, and I will.

"A short time before I reached the spot where I stumbled upon the body of the dead man, I suddenly discovered a form standing in the road before me.

"I instantly halted, for I have several times

met with assailants on my journey afoot, and as I did so, the one in my pathway called out:

"Ho, Belden, is that you?"

"It is not Belden," I answered.

"You lie! take that!" came the savage answer, and a flash and report followed, while a bullet whistled by dangerously close to my head."

"You don't mean it, sir?" said the surprised landlord.

"I do, and I will tell you more:

"Instantly I returned the fire, and with an oath the man sprang into the thicket by the roadside and disappeared.

"I at once determined not to go on immediately, but to conceal myself in the shadow of the trees and see what would turn up.

"I waited for full half an hour longer, and then went on my way, and, being on my guard, entered the copse of woods, when I came upon the body of the man I was accused of killing.

"The body was still warm, and by its side lay the handkerchief with the valuables belonging to Mr. Keene, as I afterward learned.

"I told the court, you may remember, this circumstance, but kept back what I wished to make known afterward to some one who might trace the matter up and find the real criminal.

"I was confident that my approach had startled some one, who had been robbing the body, and he fled in such haste that he left the handkerchief and its contents behind him."

"This is all very strange, Mr. Judah," said the landlord.

"There is something still more strange to tell you, for my theory is that Miss Keene did not kill the man whose murderer I was believed to be," was the low response of Alvan Judah, and the landlord fairly started from his feet in amazement at his words.

CHAPTER IX.

THE RUNAWAY.

It was some moments, after Alvan Judah had made known his theory of the murder in the woodland, before the landlord could reply.

At last he said:

"But Miss Cora frankly stated that she killed him."

"True."

"And yet you do not believe that she did?"

"I know that she did not," was the firm reply.

"Do you think her tenderness of heart caused her to say what she did, to save you from the gallows?"

"No."

"Then you have got me upside down, Mr. Judah, in all my ideas."

"Let me explain my reasons for so thinking.

"Did you hear Miss Keene's testimony about getting from her brother his pistol?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you remember what kind of pistol she said it was?"

"Yes, a revolver I think."

"Did you ever see the weapon that young Keene carries?"

"Often, for I have taken it away from him several times, fearing he would use it."

"Was it a revolver?"

"Yes."

"Of what caliber?"

"About twenty-two, I think."

"And my derringer is a *forty-four*."

"You are right, sir."

"The bullet taken from the head of the dead man was a *forty-four*."

"That is so, sir."

"Had a derringer been fired at close quarters it certainly would have sent a bullet through and through a man's head.

"Yes."

"Fired at that distance it would not."

"You are right, sir."

"Now there was another thing the doctor and others failed to notice about the dead man."

"What was that, sir?"

"Had Miss Keene fired that fatal shot, it would have been with the revolver of twenty-two caliber, and not a derringer of forty-four, while, as she said she fired directly in the face of the man, as she thought, there certainly would have been powder burns, which there was not a trace of."

"You reason well, Mr. Judah."

"I reason truly, I think, landlord."

"And what conclusion have you come to, sir, upon the mysterious affair?"

"Just this, that there were *two men* who came to that woodland upon about the same errand, and one knew the secret of the other.

"I was mistaken by one of them for the other, and fired upon.

"Now I believe that one of those men, unknown to the other, was hiding near where Miss Keene was attacked, and, about the same instant that she fired her revolver, he fired a derringer from his hiding-place and killed the man, while the lady missed him, but seeing him fall thought that her shot had taken effect.

"Expecting trouble, the one who fired the shot at once fled from the spot, and only returned late in the night to see just what had occurred, for, from some hiding-place, he must have seen

that no one went to the woods, and could not understand why Miss Keene had not reported her adventure.

"A man with a bullet in his brain may live for some little time, and the man who attacked Miss Keene may have been alive when found by the one who fired the shot, for certainly the body was warm when I found it.

"After firing upon me, I believe that he went into the woods, and was the one who attacked young Keene, caused his horse to throw him, and robbed him, after which he went to look for the one he had fired upon to save Miss Keene, and, on reaching his body, had laid down the handkerchief and its contents and was frightened off by my approach."

"Mr. Judah, you are indeed a born detective, as you said, for who would ever have traced the truth out of such a mystery as this but yourself.

"Why, it's as plain as daylight to me now, sir."

"I think I am on the right track, landlord, and, as soon as I can, I wish to solve this mystery by finding the owner of that handkerchief that held the jewelry of young Keene, and which has embroidered upon it the initials 'D. D.'"

"But can you do it, sir?"

"I can but try, and I wish to keep in correspondence with you, landlord, and together we may solve the mystery some day, and I can relieve Miss Keene's mind from the weight of her having taken human life, even in self-defense, for such is my desire."

"I am with you, heart and soul, Mr. Judah, and I'll keep as close as a dark-lantern on all you've told me, for I wish to serve you, and also would like to take the shadow off Miss Cora, for I know she feels it in spite of her bravery.

"Now, sir, just consider this house your home, and if luck goes against you in the city, come here, for I can give you the office to look after, if nothing else."

With this the kind-hearted landlord left the room, and Alvan Judah was again alone with his own thoughts.

It was late when he retired, and worn out with the excitement through which he had passed he at once sunk into a sound sleep.

The next day he took a walk out to the woodland, noted carefully the spot where Frank Keene had been thrown, and where the man had attacked Cora, and after passing several hours there in a complete study of the place and its surroundings, he returned to town and began inquiries, in a cautious way, regarding any enemies that the Keenes might have.

After several days passed at the New England Arms, Alvan Judah took his leave of the landlord, who still urged him to remain, and with his sachel swung on his stick over his shoulder, started to continue his long-interrupted tramp to New York.

Landlord Loring begged him to let him send him in his wagon to the next village, at least, which was ten miles distant; but Alvan Judah told him he needed the exercise of walking, and then had to politely and firmly decline a fifty-dollar bank-note, which the good man wished to force upon him as a loan.

Setting out upon his tramp, as he neared the forks of the road, where four highways met, he saw a phaeton dash by in the distance, across the road that he was traveling, and in it he recognized Cora Keene.

She was driving, holding the reins over a spirited pair of ponies, and by her side, propped up with pillows, was evidently her brother Frank, whom she had out for an airing.

The road that the young Hebrew was traveling led him by Oak Ridge Farm, and he was disappointed at seeing Cora driving away from home, for he had intended to stop there, for he had a motive in so doing.

But he reasoned that, as Cora had her invalid brother with her, she would not remain long away, and so he trudged on his lonely way once more.

It was just sunset when he came in sight of Oak Ridge Farm, which Landlord Loring had described to him, and he halted upon the hill-top and gazed down upon the beautiful home, nestling away upon the slope of a high ridge, and facing the spreading acres in the valley before it, and through which wound a pretty stream.

His eye also fell upon the bridge, at the bottom of the steep hill upon which he stood, and he noticed a gang of workmen just leaving it, having knocked off work for the day.

"It is time that old bridge was repaired, for it looks very shaky," he muttered, and presently added:

"They have left things in a bad way for the night, should a team come along at a rapid gait."

Hardly had he uttered the words, when he heard the rapid trampling of hoofs coming up the road behind him, and a cry of horror broke from his lips as he discerned the spirited team of Cora Keene coming along at a mad pace, while the maiden in vain strove to check their headlong speed.

"God of Abraham! she is lost, for they will plunge through that frail bridge and bear her to

her death," he cried, in a voice that showed the intensity of his feelings, while, like a statue, he stood gazing upon the terrified runaways as they came toward him like the very wind.

CHAPTER X.

AT THE RISK OF LIFE.

IF Alvan Judah was, for a moment, spell-bound at the sight that met his eyes, of two runaway horses, frightened into a frenzy from some cause, rushing toward almost certain death, and bearing with them a youth, helpless from his injuries, and a beautiful girl, struggling nobly against hope to check them, it was only for an instant that he thus stood statue-like gazing upon them.

Awaking fully to the situation, he dashed his sachel and cane to the ground, and rushed up the road to meet them.

The highway was bordered by a fence upon either side, and they ended only upon the steep bank which overhung the stream below.

At the base of the hill, which was short and steep, was the old bridge, the timbers and flooring of which the men had been repairing.

Negligent as to accident, the workmen had thrown together a few boards as a passageway for any vehicle that might come along, leaving a dangerous opening upon either side.

Unnailed as the boards were, the very first tread of the horses rushing furiously upon them would throw them out of place, and the result would be a frightful accident, and the precipitation of the animals, the vehicle and its occupants thirty feet below upon the rocky bed of the stream.

All this did Judah see at a glance, and he knew that the only possibility of saving Cora Keene and her brother from destruction was to check the flight of the animals before they reached the hill.

As they advanced upon him, he waved his hat, shouted and tried to stop them.

But in vain; they came on viciously, and he sprung one side to prevent being run down; but with a second spring he seized the off horse by the bit, and was dragged from his feet and swung along at a fearful pace.

In vain did he try to regain his footing, and in vain did he strive to check the onward rush of the maddened horses.

He might as well have tried to check the wind in its flight.

Did he let go, he would be dashed to death beneath the wheels, so he clung on desperately to the harness and neck of the horse, for his presence of mind did not forsake him.

One glance into the phaeton and he saw that Frank Keene lay back helpless and white-faced, while Cora still dragged hard upon the reins.

A moment more and they would be at the hill, and the end must come; but ere that moment of suspense passed, Alvan Judah had thrust one hand into his bosom, and drawing it forth, it held his derringer pistol.

Quickly, though dragged along at tremendous speed, and clinging for his life, he managed to turn the muzzle of the weapon upon the head of the horse upon the other side from him, and to pull the trigger.

With the report of the Jew's pistol the animal gave one mighty bound into the air and fell dead upon the very brink of the hill, his weight dragging his companion down with him, while the impetus they had sent them sliding along upon the hard ground for several lengths.

With the fall of the horse the pole had snapped, and the phaeton had rolled upon top of the animals and came very near being upset, while beneath the wreck Alvan Judah was lying in a heap.

"Brother, speak to me, for we are safe!" cried Cora, springing to her feet the instant the shock was over.

"I'm all right, sis, but I thought we were gone, for I am helpless," was the answer of Frank Keene, in a faint tone.

"Then I will aid the brave man to whom we owe our lives, and God grant he be not dead."

With this Cora sprung from the vehicle and approached the spot where Alvan Judah lay, pinned down by the weight of the living horse, which was so tangled up that he could not rise.

"I am all right, Miss Keene, though I cannot rise without your assistance. Take my knife, please, and cut the harness, and then this horse can get up and release me."

The young Hebrew spoke in the coolest tone imaginable, and as Cora now beheld his face, she said, quickly:

"You are the gentleman whom my act so nearly caused to be hanged?"

"I am Alvan Judah, the Jew, as they call me back in the village, Miss Keene," was the reply.

"And now I owe you my life, ay, and the life of my brother," and Cora spoke with deep feeling.

"I am thankful that it is so," came the low response, and just then the maiden, who had not been idle, cut the straps that held the horse, and with a loud snort he sprung to his feet.

"I sincerely hope that you are not hurt, sir," said Cora anxiously, as Alvan Judah arose to his feet.

"Oh, no, only a little bruised, and thankful it was no worse."

"I am sorry I had to kill your horse, Miss Keene, but I saw no other chance of saving you."

"When our lives are saved, sir, the horses must not be taken into consideration, and I should not have driven that wicked brute, for he was known not to be safe, and started into a run without the slightest cause that I could see, and this frightened his mate, and I could not control them."

"I could have sprung from the phaeton into the sandy part of the road, but would not leave my brother, to whom permit me to present you."

"Brother Frank, this is Mr. Judah, the gentleman to whom we owe our lives."

Frank Keene was not in a good humor, and the fright he had received made him cross, so instead of being thankful for his life, and so stating, he was insulting, and said:

"Oh, yes, you are Judah, the Jew, who so nearly got hanged the other day, and whom my sister made such a fool of herself about before a crowded court-room."

The face of Alvan Judah flushed, but he took no notice of the remark other than to say:

"Yes, Mr. Keene, I am Judah, the Jew, and but for your noble sister I would have died on the gallows for a crime of which I was guiltless."

"But it is growing late, Miss Keene, and your brother should not be exposed to the night air in his feeble condition, so if you will permit me to take this horse I will ride to your home and bring aid."

"Do so, please, Mr. Judah," answered Cora, whose face flushed angrily at her brother's rudeness.

"Do you know how to ride, for that is a wild brute?" said Frank, in an insulting way.

But paying no attention to the words, Alvan Judah sprung upon the back of the restive animal and dashed away, riding like one born in the saddle, so to speak, and winning from Frank Keene the remark:

"By Jove! but he rides like a Texan, sis."

Cora made no reply, for she was very angry with her brother, but would not resent his rudeness in his then feeble condition, so contented herself with drawing the wraps about him, and then pacing to and fro until the coming of Tobey with the family carriage, with Alvan Judah mounted upon the box with him.

"You will accompany us home, surely, Mr. Judah?" said Cora, looking toward her brother to second her invitation.

But he had settled himself comfortably back upon the carriage cushions and said nothing.

"Thank you, I will, Miss Keene, as I intended stopping at your home, for I wish to see you upon a matter of some importance— No, thank you, I will ride on the box with the driver," and other servants now coming up to look after the wrecked vehicle, Alvan Judah sprung upon the box, and the carriage rolled away toward Oak Ridge Farm, even Frank Keene willing to admit that he owed his life to Judah, the Jew, as he saw the condition of the bridge, and that certain death awaited them, had the runaway horses reached the frail structure.

CHAPTER XI.

THE JEW'S PLEDGE.

In silence Cora rode home with her brother, for she feared to address him, as she expected a hateful response, and she cared not to quarrel with him.

She had not urged that Alvan Judah should enter the carriage with them, as she felt assured that Frank, in his irritable mood, would be certain to make rude remarks, so she had submitted to the man to whom she owed her life, riding by the driver's side, when he should have been her guest within.

Arriving at the mansion Alvan Judah sprung to the ground, and stepping to the door aided Cora to alight, while he said pleasantly:

"Let me assist you, Mr. Keene, for your coachman tells me your butler is away and the other servants have gone after the phaeton."

Frank Keene was selfish, and he did not wish to exert himself, fearing that it might make him worse, so he consented with a quiet:

"I thank you."

As he reached the steps his strength seemed to fail him, and Alvan Judah tenderly raised him in his arms with a quiet:

"Permit me, for you are very weak."

Cora led the way, and the Jew bore his burden with seemingly little trouble, and placed the youth upon his bed, at the same time removing his wraps and caring for him as tenderly as though he were a child.

In spite of his ill-temper Frank Keene was touched, and said:

"You are very kind, and you will remain with us to-night?"

"Thank you, no, for I must go on my way."

"Good-by, Mr. Keene, and I trust you will speedily recover."

So saying Alvan Judah left the room, but Cora hastened after him.

"You will remain as our guest to-night?" she said, earnestly.

"No, Miss Keene, I must continue on my way, as soon as I have had a short talk with you."

"Then remain to supper at least, and I will join you as soon as I have cared for that rude brother of mine."

"Here, Bangs, I am glad you have come, show Mr. Judah to the blue room and have supper in half an hour," she said to the butler, who just then entered the hall.

With a bow of acquiescence Alvan Judah followed the butler to one of the pleasantest rooms in the grand old mansion, while Cora returned to her brother's room, and, after giving him a light supper, watched him until he fell asleep.

Then she made a hasty toilet and descended to the library, where she found her guest awaiting her.

"Supper is ready, Mr. Judah, and I confess to being hungry, in spite of my adventure," and Cora and the Jew entered the cheerful dining-room, and sat down *vis à vis* at the well-spread table, for the maiden insisted that her guest should play the part of host and take her father's seat.

During the meal Alvan Judah proved himself a charming conversationalist, and his courtly manners proved to Cora that he had been reared in the most refined society, while she was forced to confess to herself that not one of her many gentleman friends was nearly so handsome, or possessed eyes with such a depth of expression in them.

In fact, though the maiden had been attracted to the Jew by his striking appearance at the trial, she was really quite charmed with him, meeting him as she did socially while his indomitable pluck in the face of an ignominious death, and risking his life to save herself and brother, added greatly to her admiration of him.

After the meal had ended Cora led the way back to the library, and, as though called upon to explain his wish for an interview with his fair hostess, Alvan Judah at once said:

"Now, Miss Keene, having broken bread with you, let me assure you that what I say to you can only be meant in friendship."

"I cannot look upon you as other than a friend, Mr. Judah, after what you have done for me," answered Cora, with feeling.

"Pardon me, but I meant not to imply a claim upon your friendship, Miss Keene, for my act was but the canceling of the life debt I owe to you; but, as I was on my way to New York, I intended stopping at your home to ask a favor of you."

"Any favor it is in my power to grant, Mr. Judah, you have but to ask it of me," was Cora's reply.

"I beg pardon if I bring up a painful subject to you; but will you permit me to see the pistol you had with you upon the night that you were assailed in the woodland?"

Cora looked up with surprise at the strange request, but said, quietly:

"Certainly, sir. I will get it for you."

"And one other favor, Miss Keene?"

"Well, Mr. Judah," and the maiden paused.

"I believe that you brought your brother's watch and jewelry home to him in the handkerchief in which they were found by the side of the dead body?"

"I did, sir."

"Will you permit me also to see that handkerchief?"

"Certainly, for I have it in my room," and she left the library.

Soon she returned, bearing in her hands the pistol and the handkerchief.

The Jew took them, and after glancing at the pistol, said:

"Miss Keene, may I ask if it does not pain you deeply to feel that your hand has taken human life, even in self-defense?"

He saw her face whiten at his words, and her mouth quiver; but she answered firmly:

"Indeed it does, sir, and it is a shadow that will haunt me to my dying day."

"Permit me then, Miss Keene, the pleasure of removing that shadow by telling you that *you did not kill that man*."

"In God's name, sir, what do you mean?" and in her excitement Cora clutched the hand of Alvan Judah, who, in his low, earnest voice, answered:

"Miss Keene, what I say to you must be a secret between us."

"Do you promise me that it shall be?"

"Oh yes; but speak! tell me what your strange words mean?" and the beautiful eyes became dimmed with tears.

"I give you my pledge, Miss Keene, that I will one day, if not now, give you proof of what I tell you, that you are wholly guiltless of taking human life, strange as it may seem."

"But let me prove my words, by telling you that this is a twenty-two-caliber pistol, is it not?"

Cora was well versed in firearms, for her father had taught her to be a crack shot, and she answered quickly:

"Yes, sir, it is twenty-two caliber."

"Then this pistol could not possibly have fired this ball?" and he handed to her a large bullet that was partially flattened on one side.

"By no means, for this is a forty-four caliber."

"Why do you ask?"
 "You are sure that this is the weapon you fired at your assailant?"
 "I am positive."
 "Could you swear that you hit him?"
 "No, for it seemed to me that I touched the trigger before I had fair aim; but as he fell dead I am sure that I hit him," and Cora seemed to be growing nervous.
 "Miss Keene, this is the bullet that was taken from the head of the dead man, and it fits my derringer, not the little revolver you used."

Cora sat spellbound.
 What could it mean?
 At last she asked in a quivering voice:
 "Can this be true?"
 "It is true, for I secured the bullet, and I intend to use it as a means to gain an end."

"But I—"
 "I know what you would say: that you fired, and he fell, but I am sure that this bullet came from a derringer pistol, and at a distance."

"It was fired by some one who witnessed the scene between you and your assailant, and it was fired at the same instant that your pistol was discharged, so that you did not observe the other report."

Cora listened breathlessly, and then said:
 "If this be true, thank God no man's life stains my hands, even though that man was my worst enemy."

Involuntarily she had spoken in a way that suggested that she knew who the man was that she had fired upon, and Alvan Judah, ever on the alert, noted her words and pondered over them, though he did not allow her to see that she had given him a hint to act upon, and said:

"Miss Keene, I am as confident that you did not kill that man, as I am that I did not fire the fatal shot, and it was to give your mind peace that I came to you, though I do not wish you to admit the fact to me or any other living being."

"That handkerchief I wish you to let me have, for I believe it will be a link to my finding out just who fired the fatal shot."

"Should you learn anything of an important nature, you can communicate with me through Landlord Loring, of the New England Arms, and he will forward to me any letter, for I will send to him my address, when I become located, and I pledge you my word I will yet clear up the mystery that surrounds this strange affair."

"Now, Miss Keene, thanking you for your hospitality to a poor man, permit me to take my leave with every wish for your happiness in life."

"No, no, you must remain all night, Mr. Judah; in fact, until my father's return, for I am expecting him daily, and I wish you to meet him that he may thank you for all you have done for my brother and myself."

"No, thank you, Miss Keene, I must bid you farewell, and at once," was the firm response, and seeing that he meant it, Cora did not urge more, but requested him to permit her to send him in the carriage to the next town.

"No, I prefer to walk, and a ride of a few miles would only spoil me for the remainder of my journey," he said, with a smile, and grasping her outstretched hand, Alvan Judah took his leave, and shouldering his sachel, containing all his worldly goods, he went forth into the darkness of the night, and continued on his way toward the city which was the Mecca of his hopes, while he little dreamed what it held in store for him.

CHAPTER XII.

THE TELL-TALE INITIALS.

THE night was starlight and the air balmy and delightful, as Alvan Judah left Oak Ridge Mansion, and wended his way down the gravel drive, with its rows of tall Lombardy poplars bordering it.

The large and ornamental gateway was about a quarter of a mile from the house, and as the Jew placed his hand upon the latch, he suddenly received a stunning blow on the head, and dropped to his knees.

But the force of the blow was not as great as the one who dealt it meant that it should be, and besides, Alvan Judah was a hard man to kill, while his slouch hat also protected him.

Instead, therefore, of being wholly stunned and dropping his length insensible, he merely fell upon his knees, and when a dark form sprang from the shadow of a tree toward him he suddenly turned and met his assailant, grasping him with a clutch that could not be shaken off.

Alvan Judah was a powerful man, but his head was dizzy from the blow he had received, and for a moment he feared that his antagonist would prove his master, for he certainly possessed great strength.

But exerting himself to the utmost, he dealt his enemy several telling blows in the face that dazed him, and then hurling him to the ground held him there.

Drawing his little derringer the Jew said, sternly:

"You evidently intended to kill me, sir, when you dealt me that blow, and if you attempt resistance I shall surely kill you."

"Rise, sir, and walk before me back to yonder mansion."

"Curse you, let me go, for I find you are not

the one I expected to meet," said the man, hoarsely.

"It matters not, you are guilty of waylaying me on the highway, and I shall send you to prison."

"Up, sir, and obey me."

"I will pay you well to let me go."

"I am poor, fellow, but you cannot bribe me to do a wrong."

"I find you committing a crime, and I shall place you where you will not be able to do it again."

The man uttered a curse, but seeing that his captor was in earnest, he arose and preceded him up the gravel road to the stables of the farm.

There Tobey was found with another stableman, and Alvan Judah bade them tie the man firmly, and then inform Miss Keene of his capture, and ask her to send him to the village prison in the morning.

Having seen the prisoner secured beyond the possibility of escape, Alvan Judah walked to the front door, and a knock brought the butler, to whom he also communicated his tidings of the capture of the footpad, for he feared that an offered bribe might win his release from Tobey and his companion, and he wished to put this beyond possibility by having Cora know at once of his capture.

Having done this, Alvan Judah walked away rapidly in the darkness once more, and soon reached the gate, when a white object upon the ground attracted his eye.

Picking it up he saw that it was a handkerchief, and in it were tied up some papers.

Thrusting the handkerchief and its contents into his pocket, he went on his way along the country road.

A walk of an hour brought him to a small village, but its dwellers were asleep, and not a soul did he see as he walked through the deserted streets.

As he once more struck the turnpike, he heard the rumble of wheels behind him, and soon a stage came in sight.

Suffering from his head, he concluded he would draw upon his slim pocket-book for a ride, and he accordingly hailed the driver as he was going by.

"Yes, I'll give you a ride, for I know you now as that plucky Jew they tried to hang on sarcumstance evidence, and I never seen a man as has more grit than you."

"Put yer money back, for I hears you is poor, though it hain't like your people to be that way, and as you is, you must be oncommon honest."

"I goes just fifteen mile and that will give you a lift, and the fellow as drives out then is a pard o' mine, and I'll interdoce yer and he'll give you a ride to the next town, and you can get on ther keers, or walk to suit yourself."

So said the good-hearted driver, and Alvan Judah took a seat upon the box with him, and went whirling along through the country at the rate of seven miles an hour.

Arriving at the next village, the driver called his brother of the reins aside and gave him to understand just who the Jew was, and Alvan Judah received a warm invitation to accept a seat on the box for the twenty miles that the combined passenger, mail and freight coach had to go to reach the railroad town.

It was just breakfast time when the coach reached the tavern, and thanking his kind friend, the driver, Alvan Judah partook of a hearty meal, and still hoarding his limited means again set out on foot.

After a walk of a few miles he came to a snug place for a nap, and with his sachel for a pillow he threw himself down to rest.

It was late in the afternoon when he awoke, and after washing his face and hands in a brook near, he felt for his handkerchief to use as a towel, when he drew out the one he had picked up the night before at the Oak Ridge gate, and the having of which he had wholly forgotten.

As he glanced at it an exclamation of astonishment escaped him, for it was the very counterpart of the one he had put away in his sachel, and which Cora Keene had given him at his request, for in one corner were the embroidered initials—

"D. D.,"

evidently the work of some fair feminine hand, and doubtless the work of love and friendship.

Comparing the two handkerchiefs, Alvan Judah found them almost exactly alike, of the finest material, and only differing in the color in which the initials were embroidered.

Then he took up the papers, which had been tied up in it, and what he discovered there caused his handsome face to flush and then grow pale, while he muttered several times:

"Too bad! too bad!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MIDNIGHT MARAUDERS.

KEEPING to his plan of walking by night mostly, taking long naps in the mornings and afternoons, in some quiet nook by the roadside, and getting his meals at convenient farm-houses and villages, Alvan Judah hurried on to New York.

At length, as the hour of midnight drew near, and he was walking along the Westchester road,

the distant light cast up by the city met his view, and he congratulated himself that he was near the end of his long tramp.

At length he halted by the roadside, and stood leaning against a large stone gate-post, to which hung a massive gate leading into the grounds of a handsome mansion, a hundred yards back from the highway.

"There is the city I have so longed to reach, the Mecca of my hopes, where I have longed to struggle hard for a name and fortune," he said aloud.

"And now a sadness comes over me which I cannot throw off, when I know that in a couple more hours I will have reached the goal of my desires."

"In all that vast city I have not one friend, not an acquaintance even, that I can now recall."

"I will be alone, utterly so, among a strange people, while, as the foundation of my fortune I have but fifteen dollars."

"So be it, I will not despair, for I am young yet, have health and a determination to conquer success— Ha! some vehicle is approaching."

He shrunk back in the shadow of the gateway, not willing to be seen, and a moment after a light spring wagon containing three men rolled up to the gate.

"This is the place," said one of the men as he sprung out.

"The old Jew lives in style," remarked another, while the third asked:

"Where shall we leave the wagon?"

"Just inside the gate, among the shrubbery, and you, Fred, remain with it, ready to run if we have to."

"Does yer expect much trouble, cap'n?"

"No, for the old Jew keeps only one man-servant besides the wimmen-folks, and we can soon manage them; but if I need you, Fred, I will whistle three times for you, while, if we have to beat a hasty retreat, which I do not anticipate, I'll give one call, and then you open the gate and get ready to drive off at a run as soon as we reach you."

"I'll be ready, cap'n, and I hope the old Jew's boodle will ekal yer expectations."

"I know that it will, for he has a strong-box in his room, and the girl's diamonds are worth a small fortune."

Such was the conversation which Alvan Judah heard, as he crouched in the shadow of the gateway.

Then the gate was opened and the horse was led into the grounds and halted in the midst of a clump of ornamental shrubbery.

What followed between the three men Alvan Judah could not hear, though the sound of their voices reached him.

As the two men walked off, their comrade led the horse into a convenient place, and then began to pace to and fro in the walk.

Alvan Judah was an utterly fearless man, and, having heard the conversation of the men, he knew that their determination was to rob the house of the person they had spoken of as "the old Jew."

At once he intended to do what he could to thwart their villainy.

By raising an alarm he could frighten the men off; but then they would make their escape, and thus keep themselves free from the punishment they deserved, while at another time they might carry out successfully their nefarious plot.

Watching the movements of the man near him, as he turned his back to walk from him, the Jew slipped quickly over the wall and without making any sound to attract attention.

Again the man turned in his walk, and this time Alvan Judah glided forward to a large arbor-vita tree, and stood awaiting the approach of the man upon his next turn.

A moment more, and as he was wheeling about, the waiting burglar suddenly felt a cold pistol-muzzle pressed against his head, and heard the ominous words:

"You are my prisoner, sir!"

"I has the sense to admit a fact, when I sees denying it is no good," was the cool response of the fellow, after his first start of surprise.

"You will save your life by promptly obeying my orders, so walk to the head of yonder horse!"

The man obeyed.

"Now lie down flat upon your face, and put your hands up over your back!" came the stern order.

This, too, the man obeyed, and, with one of the reins the Jew hastily detached, he bound the man's hands behind him, and passing the other end around his feet had him secured beyond all possibility of escape.

Taking from him a revolver, Alvan Judah hastily tied the horse to a tree, then with a halter bound the buggy wheels, so that the animal could not be hastily driven away, and walked rapidly up toward the mansion.

He approached in the shadow of the ornamental trees, walking without sound upon the velvety grass, and began a hasty circuit of the mansion to discover just where the burglars were.

At length he caught sight of the glimmer of a lamp within one of the rooms, and saw that it was from a dark lantern.

The window sash was raised, he observed, and a flower-stand, from which the vases had been removed, had been used as a means of entrance to the mansion.

Ascending the step-like structure, Alvan Judah gazed within, and the glimmer in the hallway told him that the burglars were ascending to the floor above.

Instantly he stepped into the room, crossed it noiselessly, and glancing out of the door, beheld the two men about half-way up the broad stairway, ascending cautiously and slowly, and with their dark lantern closed, for the bronze figure upon the newel post held a gas-jet which was dimly burning.

To step forward and raise the light to its full blaze, and spring back into the cover of the doorway was the work of a second, while in a ringing voice he cried to the startled burglars:

"You are entrapped, so yield, or my men fire on you!"

The burglars stood aghast, for they felt that they were indeed entrapped.

In the shadowy space above of the hallway, their imagination caused them to see men, and at the foot of the stairs now stood Alvan Judah, the revolver he had taken from their comrade leveled at them.

The ringing words of the Jew had alarmed the household, and voices and footsteps were heard above.

"Quick! do you surrender?" cried the Jew, sternly.

"You may, Dot, but I won't, for my neck's in a noose now," shouted the one whom his comrades had called captain, and, quick as a flash he bounded over the banisters to the floor below, while he said, savagely:

"Don't bar my way, or you are a dead man!"

He was armed, and pulled trigger as he spoke, and Alvan Judah uttered a slight cry that told he was hit; but, a second after, he fired and the burglar fell heavily upon his face.

"Now, sir, do you wish to follow your comrade?" cried the Jew, addressing the other burglar, who replied, sullenly:

"Don't you see my hands is up, Cap?"

"Put down your arms, then!"

"They is down, quick," was the answer, as the burglar dropped a revolver and knife upon the stairs.

"Now come here!"

The man obeyed just as a form appeared above carrying in his hands a shotgun, and calling out:

"Vat vas t'e matters mit t'e fuss down dere?"

"Hold, sir! Do not fire, for I have captured two burglars whom I tracked into your house," said Alvan Judah, as he observed the possessor of the gun looked as though he might shoot at random.

"Purglars vas in mine house?" cried the one at the head of the stairs.

"Yes, sir, and I was compelled to kill one, though not until he shot me through the arm did I fire upon him. The danger is over now, however, and if you will kindly bring me a rope I will secure this fellow."

"Who vas you, mine fri'nt?"

"That I will explain, sir, when I have this man secured."

"Father, I will get a rope from the lumber-room," said a sweet voice, though its possessor was not visible.

"Curse you, did you undertake this alone?" growled the burglar as he stood under the muzzle of the young Jew's pistol, for seeing that he had a dangerous customer to deal with, Alvan Judah did not for an instant take the weapon off of him.

"Yes, for I had no one to aid me, and I might as well tell you that your comrade, waiting at the gate, is also a prisoner— Ah! here is a rope—"

"Your pardon, lady, for this midnight disturbance, but I have an ugly customer here I wish to secure, and then I will explain the situation," and Alvan Judah addressed a maiden who just then came down the stairs bearing a rope in her hands.

She had thrown on a *robe de chambre* of yellow silk, and it contrasted well with her glorious black eyes and ebony-hued hair, which hung in abandon far below her waist. Her face was brilliantly beautiful, her carriage haughty, and her voice rich and musical as she said:

"For the good work you have done, sir, no explanation is necessary, though such a scene at night in a quiet house is a shock to one's nerves, and especially to my father, who is not in good health; but permit me to tie this man, for he looks ugly, while you still keep your pistol covering him."

"Thank you, miss, but I will not trouble you with such distasteful work. Down on your face, sir, and be quick about it, for I am in no humor to trifle."

The man had looked the while as though watching for a chance, be it ever so slight, to make a break for liberty; but seeming to realize that his captor was in deadly earnest, he knelt down and then dropped forward, when, with an alacrity and skill that surprised the maiden, Alvan Judah bound him securely.

"You is quick at such work, Cap," growled the burglar.

"I have had practice in Mexico in roping just such fellows as you," was the quiet reply, and Alvan Judah turned toward an old gentleman who just then came slowly down-stairs.

He was a man of commanding presence, his hair and beard being snow-white, his eyes intensely black, and his features cast in a strong mold.

He looked ill, and descended the stairs with difficulty.

"Mine fri'nt, this vas a pad pizziness," he said, addressing Alvan Judah.

That he was a Hebrew a glance betrayed, as it did also that he was not one of the common class.

He had hastily dressed himself and still carried his shotgun.

"Yes, sir, it is certainly a most unpleasant affair; but I am thankful it was no worse. I was, fortunately, on my way into the city, and halting by your gate to rest, saw three men drive up in a wagon, and heard their plot to rob you. One remained in your grounds with the horse and wagon, and, after securing him, I came on here, found that these two had entered the library window, so followed them, and was so fortunate as to prevent their doing harm; but have you no man-servant in the house, whom you can send for an officer?"

"Mine fri'nt, this is no time to thanks you, so you vill wait another moments for that."

"As for mine man-servant he vas gone to a barty to-night, but must come soon home, and t'e vimmen gals is up-stairs so padly scared as I vas."

"Then I will go after an officer if you will direct me where to find one."

"But you are wounded, sir, for see—your hand is blood-stained!" anxiously said the maiden, and then she added:

"Permit me to dress your wound, as best I can, and then I will go after help."

"No, no, miss! I would not hear to your going out, and my wound is but slight. This man is dead," and he bent over the burglar captain, "and will give you no trouble, and this one cannot, so I will go myself."

The maiden directed Alvan Judah where to find the nearest police station, and he left the house, the beautiful Jewess locking the door after him.

As he had no reins for the horse of the burglars, and the police-station was not very far, he hastened on, on foot, and leaving the grounds, was rapidly walking along the highway, when suddenly a man stepped out from behind a huge rock, and leveling a pistol full at him, cried:

"Now, Jew, your time has come to die!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE INFLUENCE OF A THREAT.

I MUST now return to the prisoner, whom Alvan Judah left in the hands of Tobey, the coachman, at Oak Ridge Farm.

As the young Jew had anticipated, and had prepared against by informing the butler of his capture, that he might make it known to Cora, the prisoner, the moment he was left in the hands of the negroes, began to plot for his escape.

He was a man whose appearance suggested that he had at least been born a gentleman, whatever level his evil nature might have dragged him down to.

He was rather fine-looking, though his face bore a sinister expression, and his attire was of fashionable cut.

The moment he was alone with his two keepers, he said:

"Well, my men, there is a mistake about this, for that fellow, without inquiry as to my motives, sprung upon me and dragged me here, while he has gone on his way, leaving me to appear like a thief in the eyes of Miss Keene, whom I know quite well."

"The fact is, I have some news of an important nature for Doctor Keene, and I of course do not wish to be seen in this plight, so will pay you well to release me, and to-morrow I will call and be all right."

"Boss, we gits ourselves inter trouble if we lets you go," said Tobey.

"No, no, for I certainly will not speak of it, and Miss Keene is not aware of my having been caught and treated as a common thief. Say twenty dollars apiece and let me go."

The argument of the man was good, and when backed up by a promise of money was rather convincing.

Tobey and his comrade were human, and twenty dollars in their eyes were not to be idly thought of.

As they hesitated, and each glanced at the other with a look of virtuous doubt as to the right of releasing the prisoner, that worthy, seeing that they might be "convinced" by a still stronger argument, asked Tobey to take a roll of bank-bills from his pocket and count out two piles of thirty dollars each.

This Tobey did with alacrity, and the prisoner said:

"Now, my man, take one pile for yourself and give your comrade the other, and let me go."

Tobey put the remainder of the money back

into the prisoner's pocket, handed his companion his share of the bribe, pocketed the other, and said:

"Boss, we does this 'cause we thinks thar has been a mistake made ag'in' yer, as yer looks like a gemman."

"I am a gentleman, my man, so now release me, and let me go, for— Hal!"

The exclamation was caused by the sudden appearance of the butler, who said:

"Tobey, Miss Cora sent me for the priz'ner, for I is to put him in the trunk-room up-stairs, for safe-keeping."

The man groaned, for it was too late now to tempt the negroes, with their young mistress aware of his capture.

Tobey looked at Lynx, his comrade, and Lynx eyed Tobey, and both looked as innocent as lambs.

"All right; we was jist goin' ter fetch ther gem'man inter ther house," said Tobey, and he continued:

"Come, sah; missy wants yer, an' yer has ter go."

"Can't you yet manage it?" whispered the prisoner.

"Manage nothin', boss, for if you is guilty you has ter suffer, same as niggers does that is caught smellin' round a hen-roost, an' if yer is innercent, then yer can git away without no trouble."

"Come, sah! Missy Cora have sent for you," and Tobey escorted the prisoner to the door of the mansion, having wholly forgotten having received a bribe, which he then had safely put away in his pocket.

The prisoner was very pale when he entered the mansion, as he saw Cora standing in the hall apparently awaiting him, while she said:

"Tobey, leave the man in the trunk-room, so that he cannot escape, and then mount a horse and ride to the village for an officer."

"Miss Keene, there is some mistake, as I can explain, if you will allow me to see you alone," said the man, and he suddenly turned so that Cora Keene beheld his face.

She started, as she saw him now under the glare of the hall-lamp, and slowly came the words:

"Is it you, sir, that has fallen so low as to be a common burglar?"

"Again I say, Miss Keene, there has been a sad wrong done me. I have papers of importance which I was bringing to your father, and that man came upon me, attacked me, and accusing me of being a burglar, dragged me to the stables and left me in the keeping of your servants; but, if you will permit me to see you alone, I can convince you that a wrong has been done me."

"He told us de same t'ing, missy," put in Tobey.

A look of scorn was upon Cora's face, but as her eyes met those of the prisoner, she read there a look of warning, and as she hesitated, he added:

"Could your father see the nature of the papers I have, I am confident, that he would at once release me."

"You can show them to the officer, sir."

"They relate to your brother, Miss Keene, and perhaps you had better see them before an officer does, as your father is doubtless away from home."

There was a significance in the words and manner of the man that caused Cora to almost shudder with dread of coming evil, and since he had spoken of her brother, she dared not disregard what he said, so she remarked:

"My father is away, and in his absence I will look at the papers, sir."

Then turning to the servants, she continued:

"Take the prisoner into the library and let me hear what he has to say; but do not go beyond call."

"Yes, missy," replied Tobey, and the prisoner was led into the library, where a moment after Cora joined him and the negro retired.

Cora Keene was evidently nervous, for the mention of her brother's name by the man had made her so.

She remembered how the man, whom she now began to feel that her shot had not killed, had held papers which surely would have sent Frank to prison, did any one care to use them against him.

The one who now asserted that he had important papers, she had just as much to dread from as she had had from Macy Belden, whose body then lay in the village churchyard.

She entered the room with a sinking heart, yet wore a haughty, cold bearing, and her first remark was meant to hide her real feelings, for she said:

"Now, sir, I am ready to hear what you have to say, but I must confess that I am surprised that one over whom there hangs the doom of a criminal, should come here where you are known."

"I am safe here," was the cool response.

"And wherefore, pray?"

"Because I hold a secret that will give me company in my prison cell."

Cora shivered, but replied:

"Of whom do you speak?"

"Frank Keene."

"Do you dare assert that my brother has done a criminal act?"

"I dare say that he forged names to paper, and would have gone to prison, had I not redeemed them to save him."

"Those forgeries I now hold, and unless I get their price he shall go to prison, if I go there in getting him jailed."

Cora did not wince, for she had expected some such charge as this.

She knew that the man before her, like the one she had met in the woodland, had been most intimate with her brother, and might have led Frank to sin, to get him into his power.

He, too, had once been an honored guest at her father's home, and even had proposed for her hand.

But she had ever feared him and never liked him.

He had gone to the bad, she knew, and had escaped punishment for his sinful acts, to now appear before her and add to her misery.

The Jew had captured him as he had sent her word by the butler, skulking around the grounds, and with evident intention to do some lawless act; but she now felt assured that the prisoner's intention had been to see her brother and force from him money on the secret he held.

Death had given her the papers held by Macy Belden, and gold must buy those in the possession of the man then before her.

"What is the nature of the papers that you hold?" asked Cora, with as much indifference of manner as she could assume.

"Your brother, young as he is, is a desperate gambler."

"I am aware that he gambles, sir."

"Are you also aware that, to pay his debts, he has resorted to criminal acts?"

"What, for instance?" was the cool query.

"Such as forging names to paper, and getting the money thereon."

"You may have inveigled him into some such act to profit thereby yourself, where he did not look upon it as criminal."

"The law will not take that view of the case, Miss Keene."

"Then you intend to bring these charges against my brother?"

"Oh, no, not if I am paid my price."

"Name your price."

"I want just the face of the forgeries I hold."

"And how much do they amount to?"

"Nine thousand dollars."

"I have no such sum."

"Your father has."

"He will have to know what it is for, and he will let the law take its course rather than buy up forged papers to save a son who is a dishonor to his old age."

"Then I cannot get my price?"

"I did not say that."

"What then?"

"I have, say five hundred dollars in money, which I intended for another purpose, and—"

"Don't take me for a fool, Cora Keene."

"You are too great a villain for me to place you in the category of fools!" was the quick retort.

"You flatter me," sneered the man.

"I know you; but, as I was saying, I have five hundred dollars in money, and jewels that will bring at a sale eight thousand dollars."

"These I will give you, and no more, for it is all I have."

"When?"

"Within five minutes after you show me the papers."

The villain smiled triumphantly, and placed his hand in his breast-pocket, when he suddenly turned deadly pale.

An instant his hand remained there, while he seemed hardly to have the power of movement or speech.

"Well, sir?" said Cora.

"I thought I had the papers with me, but I remember now that I left them at my lodgings. I will bring them to you to-morrow night, meeting you in the grounds, wherever you may say."

"No, you may bring them here, and I will receive you in the library."

"But your father?"

"He is away, but should he return I will arrange that he does not see you, as it might be the worse for you."

"Bring the papers at eight o'clock, and the butler will let you in."

"Good-night, sir," and Cora was turning upon her heel, when the man called out:

"You forget that my hands are still in bonds, and my feet are hobbled."

"Ah, yes—Tobey!" and Cora stepped to the door.

"Yes, missy," and the negro entered the room.

"Untie the ropes that bind that man and set him free, for I am now confident that he did come here on a message of importance to me."

"Yes, missy," and Tobey soon freed the villain, who bowed low to Cora, took his departure with considerable haste, and once away from the mansion, started in a run for the gate leading into the estate.

Once there he searched about on the ground most thoroughly, but finding nothing, cried:

"Great God! I have lost those papers, and

with them goes my power over that haughty beauty and her fool of a father.

"By Heaven! but I had them when I set upon the Jew, and he is the one who has them now, so on his track I go in all haste, for unless I get them and force the money from Cora Keene, I have hardly enough to get me into Western wilds beyond the reach of the law."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE.

WHEN Alvan Judah, the Jew, was so suddenly confronted by a man standing in his pathway, holding a pistol in his face, it certainly was a surprise, and it needed no thought to tell him that he was in a most critical situation.

He had been hastening on to the police station, anxious to relieve the old Hebrew and his daughter from the incubus upon their home, in the shape of a dead and living burglar, and besides, he had received a flesh-wound in the arm, which was slowly bleeding, and giving him some pain.

The life he had led in Mexico had given Alvan Judah considerable experience in the art of self-defense, and, as the reader has seen, the possession of this accomplishment rendered him good service on more than one occasion.

Now, as he was faced by a man whose words gave him reason to feel that he meant to kill him, Alvan Judah dropped to the ground like a flash, and the bullet whistled over his head; but though he had seemingly fallen, the young Jew had not done so, for from his crouching position he threw himself upon his intended assassin with such force as to send him on his back, while the impetus caused him to fall over him, and ere he could check himself, roll down a steep declivity the descent of which was some twenty feet.

Hastily regaining his feet and running to the top of the hill, he found his enemy gone. He looked up and down the road, but saw no trace of him.

His cane and sachel lay in the road where he had dropped them, but the intended assassin had fled.

"That was the man whom I have twice before met, and whose initials are D. D. How he escaped from those I left him with at Oak Ridge Farm I do not know, but certain it is that he is on my track and meant to kill me. Well, we will meet again, doubtless."

So saying, the young Jew picked up his sachel, and swinging it upon his cane over his shoulder, trudged on his way once more.

Soon a green light caught his eye, as the way became more thickly settled, and going toward it, he discovered that it was the police station.

Entering, he found a sergeant in charge, and quickly told him his story, and then asking for a surgeon to dress his wound, he was directed a few doors further on to where a physician lived.

"By the time he has fixed you up, sir, we will be ready to start, for I have to send out on the beats for a couple of men, as I have only one man on duty with me," said the sergeant.

Judah went on to the house of the physician, but finding that he was away on a professional call, continued on his way.

As he did not return in a quarter of an hour, the sergeant sent after him, but learned, with surprise that he could not be found, so he was forced to go to the home of Emanuel Gaspar with his two men only.

Arriving at the gate, he found the horse and wagon, and lying near them, securely bound, the burglar whom Alvan Judah had first made prisoner.

At the mansion door he was met by the valet of the aged Hebrew, who had just returned, and was in a plight at the way he found affairs at the mansion.

The dead burglar captain lay in the hall, as an evidence of the young Jew's deadly aim, and near him was the third one of the robber trio, securely bound.

Murielle Gaspar, the beautiful Jewess, explained the situation to the officers, and then asked, quickly:

"But, where is our brave defender?"

The police sergeant told her how he had directed Alvan Judah to a physician, and, since then, had not seen him, but inferred that he had gone on to find another surgeon to dress his wound.

"Was he dangerously wounded, sir?" asked Murielle, anxiously.

"I think not, for he seemed to make light of it; but he had bled freely."

"When you have taken these burglars with you, sir, will you kindly have one of your men take a carriage and look up that young man, and bring him back to us?" asked Murielle.

"If you wish it, miss, certainly; and, in fact, it is very important that we should find him as a witness."

"As for that fellow he has killed, he is entitled to a reward, for that is one of the worst men in the city, and is an escaped convict, for whose capture, dead or alive, quite a little sum is offered."

"Oh! he'll turn up to get his reward, miss."

"I fear it, for though he seemed like one who was in indigent circumstances, he yet appeared to me to be a man who would accept no favors."

"He certainly had a noble look about him,

miss, although he was so dust-covered and pale-looking; but there are mighty few men that go against their interests nowadays," said the practical sergeant.

"Well, sergeants, if you finds t'e shentilmans for me I vill give you five hundred tollers," said Emanuel Gaspar, who had sat in silence, listening to all that had occurred.

"It is my duty to find him, sir, without the very liberal reward you offer," said the surprised sergeant.

"Vell, you finds t'e shentilmans, and I gives you t'e monish, for he have saved me mooch fortunes, and maybe my life and t'e lives of mine daughter, and I vas vish to do him some good."

"I'll do my best, Mr. Gaspar, you may depend upon it, and send you word as soon as I can hear something of him," and the sergeant followed his men out of the house, for they had already departed with the body of the dead burglar and the prisoner.

Upon arriving at the station-house the sergeant at once set his best detectives to work to find the young Jew.

But, night came, and no trace of him could be found, and word to that effect was sent to Emanuel Gaspar, the Jew millionaire, as he was called.

The papers were full of the attack upon the elegant mansion of the wealthy Hebrew, and its being thwarted by a young man who, after his daring deed, had mysteriously disappeared.

Then a personal paragraph was put into the *Herald*, calling upon the unknown defender of the Gaspar Mansion to communicate with the police head-quarters and receive the reward due him for the capture of one and killing of another of the burglar trio, who were escaped convicts.

Still no answer came, and, as is usual in the great metropolis, after being a "nine-days' talk," the tragedy and the unknown actor therein drifted out of the minds of all excepting Murielle Gaspar and her father, and they continued to hope against hope that their gallant preserver would yet be found.

But the summer changed to autumn, and winter with its chilling winds and driving snow came, and the police-sergeant gave up the hunt, confident that he would never win his reward, and told Emanuel Gaspar that his idea was that some of the rest of the gang had been in waiting and, tracking the young Jew, had killed him and thus ended his career, for, added the sergeant:

"No sane man would hide himself from those who wished to serve him, especially when he was poor, as I am confident he was, and needed aid."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE RECOGNITION.

It was near the merry Christmas time, and the ground was covered with snow. The metropolis was ablaze with light, the shop-windows looked like fairy palaces, hurrying men and women with arms full of bundles, and the jingle of sleigh-bells mingled with the sound of voices and bustle of a moving mass of humanity and beasts.

Suddenly a stylish carriage rolled up to the pavement, and stopped on the corner of a side street, near the door of one of New York's grand jewelry establishments, and a footman sprang to the carriage-door.

"Daniel, go in and ask if my purchases are packed yet, and if not, say that I will wait for them," said a sweet voice within the vehicle.

"Yes, miss," and the footman entered the brilliantly-lighted store, while the occupant of the carriage, muffled up in costly furs, lowered the window-glass to gaze out.

Suddenly a woman's form came along the street, and it seemed at the first glance that she had been imbibing deeply in honor of the merry season, for she staggered and clutched for support against the railing that ran alongside of the store.

"How fearful a thing it is to see a woman fallen so low," murmured the occupant of the carriage, with scorn in her tone.

Then she saw another form appear—a tall man, with broad shoulders, drawn together with cold, for he wore no overcoat, and walked as though he felt the bitter weather.

He was passing the woman as she stood clinging to the rail, when something about her seemed to strike him, and turning quickly he said:

"My good woman, you are ill and in distress."

"Oh sir! I came out to buy bread for my children, and a wretch snatched my little pocket-book from my hand."

"It had but a trifle in it—a paltry two dollars, but it was all I had in the world, and I am not strong, so it has made me feel as though I would fall here in the snow and die."

The story was a pitiable one, and one glance into the face, upon which the carriage-lamp shone, was sufficient to show that the woman told the truth.

"My good woman, I have but five dollars in the world, and I am just starting upon a long tramp up into the country, where I know I can get work, for here I can find nothing; but you are welcome to two dollars of what I have."

Here, take it, for your children must not go hungry, the night before Christmas."

"Oh, sir," cried the woman, but he forced into her hand two one-dollar bills, and drawing his coat more closely about him was hurrying on, when suddenly the carriage door was thrown open, and out sprang the occupant.

The light shone upon a heavily-furred, slender form, and a face that was bright and most beautiful.

Into the snow she set her dainty feet; her gloved hands were stretched outward, and suddenly the man, who would have turned aside and avoided the elegantly-dressed lady in her seeming haste, felt his hands seized in both her own, while upon his surprised ears fell, in sweetest accents:

"I have found you at last, and now you shall not escape me."

The man started back and gazed upon the beautiful face that looked so earnestly up into his own.

He had seen it once before, and then in her own home, when she owed much to him, perhaps the life of her father.

She was Murielle Gaspar, the Jewess.

He was Alvan Judah, the Jew.

"Oh, sir, already has God rewarded your noble act to me, for with that sweet lady your friend, I am sure you can know no more suffering."

The speaker was the poor woman whom Alvan Judah had given the money to, and she glided hastily away after giving utterance to her words of gratitude.

But neither the man nor the maiden seemed to hear her, for the former seemed to be suddenly overwhelmed, as though with some terrible stroke, for he uttered not a word, while the face of the latter beamed joyously, and she still grasped the hands of Alvan Judah, as though fearful that he might try to escape her.

"Do you not know me?" she asked, after a moment.

"Yes, I remember you perfectly, lady," was the low reply.

"And you treated my father and myself shamefully, to hide from us as you did; but I have found you now, and you are to return home with me in the carriage, and most warmly will you be welcomed."

"No, lady, I am hardly fit company for any one to-night, but if you wish it, I will call at another time," he said, sadly.

"No, you must go with me now, for I heard you tell that poor woman that you intended to leave the city, where I feel that you have suffered from poverty, though you are too proud admit it to me."

"You are to go, sir, for I will not have you say nay, and— Well, Daniel?" and she turned to the footman, who just then came out of the store.

"The things will not be ready for more than an hour, miss," was the report of the footman.

"Then, Daniel, you remain and bring them home, hiring a cab to bring you, for I have met a gentleman friend here whom I am anxious to at once have return with me to my father."

"Joseph, drive home with all speed," she added, addressing the driver, and then, as if having made up her mind to take no refusal, she said to Alvan Judah:

"Now, sir, we will start home."

Alvan Judah saw that it would be the height of rudeness to further refuse, so he aided Murielle into the carriage, and then followed her, while the footman closed the door and the vehicle rolled rapidly away.

Through the lighted streets the carriage passed, the spirited horses crushing the snow beneath their feet, out through Central Park, and then along the highway leading to the elegant home of Emanuel Gaspar.

At length the horses were drawn down to a walk as they approached a hill, then a loud voice was heard, and then the carriage came to a sudden halt, while the door was jerked rudely open, and a man's form was visible, while in threatening tones came the words:

"Come, miss, I want my Christmas gift! I want yer money, jewels, and all yer has bought down-town, so hand 'em over or take the consequences."

CHAPTER XVIII.

RUINED.

BACK to the hills and valleys of New England, to Oak Ridge Farm, I would have the reader accompany me, some days after the departure of Alvan Judah for New York city.

After having released the prisoner, upon his promise to return the following night with the papers which condemned her brother, and for which she was willing to make such a sacrifice of her personal effects, Cora Keene did not for a moment doubt but that he would return, for she knew well his sordid character, and that, with threatened punishment hanging over him for crimes committed he would be but too anxious to seek safety in flight.

But the night wore away and he did not come, and, after waiting until midnight she retired to rest, thinking that the fellow held no such papers as he had said, and merely told her so to gain his release.

Still, why was he in that neighborhood, she wondered.

He had been known to the dead man, she was well aware, and that the two should be near her home was a mystery that she could not solve.

The next day she rode out alone on horseback, in the hope of meeting him; but she took good care to carry with her a revolver, and have it ready for use if needed.

But after a long ride she returned without seeing the one she sought, and met at the gateway Doctor Austin Travers.

He saluted her in his pleasant way, and said: "Miss Cora, I have heard of your escape, and that of your brother, and offer you my warmest congratulations thereon."

"Thank you, Doctor Travers, and are you aware to whom we owe our escape from certain death?"

"From a tramp, some one said, who was going along the highway at the time."

"If walking along the highway, because he has no money to ride from town to town makes a man a tramp, Doctor Travers, our rescuer was one, for he was on his way to New York, with his worldly goods swung upon his back."

"Then I was rightly informed regarding his being a tramp; but I envy him the service he rendered you," warmly said the doctor.

"He but returned, so he said, a service I had rendered him."

"Indeed? In what way had you served him, Miss Cora?"

"Saved him from the gallows."

"Ha! it was that handsome Jew then?" and the doctor's face clouded.

"Yes, it was the Hebrew gentleman, who so nearly lost his life by my act, and who, I judge, is glad to shake the dust of our neighborhood off his feet."

"He was fortunate in being near."

"My brother and myself were more fortunate, Doctor Travers, and I can never forget his risking his life to save us."

"Frank was fretful and rudely insulted him, but Mr. Judah had the good sense to overlook his words, and after tea started on foot, refusing my offer of a carriage to continue his way to the city."

"Soon after his departure he found a man skulking about, as though intending mischief, and brought him up to Tobey, but I found that the fellow had come to bring some papers of an important character to my father, and so I released him."

"Why, the Jew has made himself quite a hero," said the doctor, in a way that showed he was jealous.

"In my eyes he ever will be," was Cora's cool remark, and the doctor changed the subject by asking after Frank.

"He is improving rapidly since you saw him, though the shock of the runaway did him no good."

"I was called away to Boston on important business, and felt that he could spare me, with such a good nurse as you have proven yourself, to watch over him."

"But has your father returned?"

"No, doctor, but I expect him hourly," and the two rode on together up to the mansion.

Aiding Cora to dismount, Doctor Travers went up to see Frank, promising to join the maiden at tea in half an hour.

"And how did you find my brother?" asked Cora, as the young physician entered the library some time afterward.

"Much improved, and confident that he will be himself again in two weeks more."

A pleasant *tête-à-tête* followed, and then the fair young hostess and her guest adjourned to the parlor, the doctor, for some reason, seeming strangely nervous for one of his profession.

"Miss Cora," he said, approaching her as she sat at the piano, having just finished a song he had asked her to sing for him, "I think I may say that my professional services toward your brother end to-day, for he no longer needs my care."

"You have saved his life, Doctor Travers, and, with myself, father will ever appreciate all that you have done."

"I have but done my duty, Miss Cora; but while I have been here, watching by your brother's bedside, I have not been blind to your noble nature, and from the time that I first met you as a young girl, I have loved you, that love increasing with time, until now I feel that you hold my happiness in your little hands, and I beg you, Cora, for one word of hope that some day I may claim you as all my own."

He had taken her hand as he spoke, and his voice and manner proved how deeply in earnest he was.

She did not withdraw her hand, nor did she blush at his words, but looking him squarely in the face was about to reply, when up to the door rolled a carriage, and she heard the loud call with which her father was wont to make his arrival known.

"Pardon me, for my father has come," and she sprung to the door, to be clasped in the strong arms of a stern-faced but handsome old gentleman who just then entered the room.

"Bless you, my child, how glad I am to see you again; and where is Frank?" said Doctor

Keene, and in asking the question an anxious look swept over his face.

"Father, Frank has not been very well of late, but here is Doctor Travers, and he can tell you all."

"Ah, Travers, glad to see you, and I suppose you are here to attend Frank; but nothing serious, I hope?"

Doctor Travers shook hands with the master of Oak Ridge Farm, and in a terse, professional way, told the story of Frank's injuries, and how it had been decided by Cora and himself not to let him know of the trouble at home, unless there was absolute need for his coming.

"I am glad that you did not recall me, now that you tell me my boy is in no danger, for it would have been only at a great sacrifice that I could have come, and I have perfect confidence in you, Travers, if you have yet a few years to live before you reach thirty."

"But I will go at once to see the boy," and Doctor Keene soon after entered Frank's room.

There was no word of upbraiding toward the erring youth, only affectionate solicitude, and when Frank said:

"Father, I owe my life to Doctor Travers," the old physician said earnestly:

"When I now know how seriously you were hurt, and see you as you are, I can well believe it, my son."

"And I hope sister will marry Travers, for he deserves her, and loves her to death, as a blind man can see; but she is sweet on a Jew tramp."

"Frank, now dare you speak as you do?" cried Cora, indignantly, for Doctor Travers was also present, and then, with her face crimson with anger, she told her father the story of her being assailed in the woodland and all that followed.

Not just as it occurred did she tell all, for she kept back the knowledge that she was acquainted with the dead man, and that, as Macy Belden, he had once been a guest at their home.

Nor did she betray the secret of the Jew, that other hand than her own, as she was confident, had fired the fatal shot.

The manner in which she saved the Jew from the gallows, and then his having risked his life to save herself and Frank she made known, and then concluded by saying:

"And now, father, because I would not see that man die on the gallows when innocent, and treated him kindly, as he deserved to be, Frank makes this unkind charge against me," and tears filled the beautiful eyes of the maiden.

"My son, your sister has done just right in everything, and it is to her credit that she has acted as she has, while I am surprised that you, even ill though you were, should have been rude to any one, especially to one to whom you owed your life and your sister's."

"But I am too happy at your escape to scold you, so will only say that I would like to find this young Hebrew that I may reciprocate as far as I can the obligations he has placed me under to him."

"I hate Jews," sneered Frank, but no notice was taken of the remark, and the conversation was changed, and soon after Doctor Travers took his leave, and as father and daughter stood on the piazza together, Cora said:

"Father, Doctor Travers honored me to-night by an offer of his hand."

"And your answer, my child?"

"I was about to tell him that I did not love him, nor did I feel that I ever could, when you drove up ere I replied."

"Then his attention is distasteful to you?"

"Oh, no, father: for he is a noble man, and I respect and like him very much as a friend, but nothing more."

"I am glad to hear you say this, Cora, for I wish my daughter to make a more brilliant match than to marry a poor country practitioner, fine fellow though he is."

"There are plenty of rich young men in the city whom you can have your choice of, and you are too young to think of marrying, for, let me see, you are not eighteen yet?"

"I will not be eighteen for three months, father."

"Now, my child, I will go to my study and see what letters have come for me, as I am all in the dark on my correspondence, for I did not stop in New York, so anxious was I to return home."

He kissed Cora good-night and sought his library, and she sought her room.

But not to sleep, and as hour after hour passed and her father did not come up-stairs, for she could have heard him if he had passed her door, she slipped on a wrapper and descended to the library.

There sat her father, his face buried in his hands and a mass of unopened letters before him.

"My child," he groaned, as he heard her step and looked up at her, and what followed was spoken very slowly:

"I am ruined, I fear utterly, for the bank in which most of my financial interests lay has failed, and another letter tells me that an almost sure investment, and which I mortgaged heavily to go into, is worthless."

"God only knows what I shall do, for you do not know the half yet."

"Never mind, father, for if you are poor I love you just as dearly, and you know I am considered a good artist, and my paintings will bring us a good income, and Frank can certainly do something for a living."

"Frank! your brother! oh, my child, I have cramped myself to pay off his deeds of wrong, to save him from prison."

"No, no, all is gone, and what the end will be God only knows," and the almost broken-hearted old man buried his face in his hands and sobbed like a child.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE SACRIFICE FOR GOLD.

It was late the next morning when Cora arose, and she anxiously asked regarding her father, for she feared that the blow he had received, in losing his fortune, might have caused an attack of illness, knowing, as she did, that he was suffering from heart trouble.

Learning that he was pacing the front piazza, she hastily dressed and went down-stairs.

"Here is a letter for you, Cora, brought by Travers's boy," said her father.

He looked pale and anxious as he handed her the note.

Evidently he had not slept all night.

Breaking the seal somewhat impatiently, she glanced at the contents, and then cried:

"Oh, father! listen to this."

Aloud she read:

"MY DEAR MISS CORA:—I cannot refrain from sending you word of a most delightful piece of news, which fell to me last night."

"Upon my return home I found a gentleman awaiting me, and he was an attorney from Chicago."

"It seems that my father invested largely, many years ago, in Illinois lands, and a number of acres that I held there, believing to be of little value, now turn out to be worth a million and more, for I am offered that sum for them."

"This change in my fortunes necessitates my going at once out to Chicago, and ere I depart I would like to see you, and have from you an answer to my offered love last night."

"I will call over this afternoon, and speak to your father upon the subject, and live in hopes that you will not cast aside the hand of one who loves you as devotedly as does
AUSTIN TRAVERS."

"Oh, father! is he not fortunate?" cried Cora. "Yes, very fortunate; but he must not be rash, or get into the hands of lawyers, for if his property is worth a million and a half now, it will soon double itself, and he had better not dispose of it all."

"But I will have a talk with him upon the subject, and, Cora, now that I think of it, as Dr. Travers is to call this afternoon for an answer from you, I really feel that you should accept him."

"Father!" and there was almost indignation in the way she uttered the word.

"My child, there is nothing against Travers, and as he is now a rich man it will not do to cast him aside."

"I can bolster up my affairs for a few months, and then he can help me out, so that I can get upon my feet again, financially."

"As it is, if I have to give up my house in New York, this dear old home where I was born, my father before me, and which is also your birth-place, it would kill me."

"My ranch must go, cattle, property and everything, and I would go too, for it would break my heart to go from wealth and luxury to poverty and cheap living."

"Now, my child, accept Travers and you save your poor old father; refuse him, and I am a ruined man, and, more, I can never live through the ordeal."

Cora's head was bent low and her form trembled; but only for an instant, for raising her face and gazing straight into her father's eyes, she said:

"Father, I am aware that Frank has driven you to poverty more than your speculations have, for I know all, and now I am glad that I do."

"For myself, I would gladly be poor if happiness would come with poverty; but for you I must make every sacrifice, and I will accept Doctor Travers, and strive hard to love him, so cheer up, and let us not speak upon the subject again."

"God bless you, my child, for you know not the heavy load you have taken from my heart and brain."

Cora made no reply, but sighed, for she could not but see that her father had suddenly developed a selfishness of nature she had not known him to be possessed of before; but then she had never before seen him brought face to face with anticipated poverty, and under such circumstances a man, to preserve his riches, grasps at every straw, whether a noble or ignoble one.

That afternoon Doctor Travers called, and the old physician made it a point to meet him upon the piazza.

He congratulated him over and over again upon his good fortune, told him not to be hasty in making sales of land that was improving in value so rapidly, and then led him into the parlor and called Cora.

The maiden entered soon after and found the young doctor alone, for her father had excused himself and taken a hasty departure, not giving

Austin Travers a chance to talk with him upon the subject so near his heart.

Cora showed no blushing face, such as one might expect in one who was going to listen to a proposal from a man who was to be her husband.

She greeted the doctor pleasantly and then took a seat near him while she congratulated him upon the good fortune that had befallen him.

"I am indeed fortunate, Cora, but I prize it only in the hope that you will share with me my riches."

"Last night, ere you could reply to my offer of love, your father arrived; but I went away hopeful that I might not be rendered unhappy by your response."

"Last night I told you of my deep love for you; this morning I wrote you of my prospects in life, and that I was no longer a poor country doctor, and now I have come for my answer."

"Will it be yes, Cora?"

He took her hand and looked up into her face. Cora Keene was very pale, and her hand trembled a little, while pearly tear-drops rolled down her cheeks.

But her voice was firm as she answered:

"I will be your wife, Doctor Travers, though I am young yet, and hardly know what love is."

"But I will try and love you more and more, and make you a true, devoted wife."

"Can I say more?"

He could not, or did not ask more, for though she had not said that she loved him, in the happiness her words gave him, he did not notice it, and that day he started for the West to take possession of his fortune, and departed with a heart that was full of joy.

But what a shadow would have fallen upon his heart had he seen poor Cora, after his departure, throw herself upon her bed and weep as though her heart would break, while she moaned bitterly:

"I do not love him! I do not love him, and may God forgive me if I do wrong; but I sacrifice myself to save my father and brother."

CHAPTER XX.

CATCHING A TARTAR.

LET us return to the situation in which we left Murielle the Jewess, halted in the roadway by a footpad.

His words, as he threw open the carriage door, proved that he knew her, and also that he believed she would bring him a rich harvest by robbery.

There were two of them, and they had patiently awaited in the snow and cold the coming of the carriage.

When the vehicle had drawn near they had stepped out of the shadow of the trees, just at the foot of the hill, and while one seized the horses by their bits with one hand, he leveled a pistol at the coachman with the other.

His comrade meanwhile sprang to the door of the carriage, with a word of warning to the coachman, and throwing it open confronted, as he believed, the Jewess only, for in the darkness he did not see distinctly.

But he felt, for a blow full in his face felled him, as a shot might have done, and so quickly and noiselessly that Alvan Judah was out of the carriage and advancing upon the other footpad, ere that worthy was aware of the change in the situation of affairs.

Seeing the form of the Jew approaching, and in the darkness mistaking him for his comrade, he cried:

"What's up, Nat?"

With a bound Alvan Judah was upon him, and the pistol was struck from his hand, while the two men clinched in a death-struggle.

"Drive on, coachman, for I will take care of this fellow," shouted Alvan Judah, and the terrified coachman at once started to obey, when Murielle, who had one foot upon the carriage-step, and was leaning out gazing upon the scene, called out:

"Hold on, sir! do not dare do such a cowardly act, but get off of your box and aid that gentleman."

"The horses will run away if I do, miss," answered the coachman, and speaking in a tone that showed his anxiety to do likewise.

"Then remain where you are, and I will aid him," responded the brave girl, and she sprang from the vehicle, just as the man whom Alvan Judah had felled was staggering to his feet, for the blow had temporarily stunned him.

"Down, sir, or I will shoot you!" cried Murielle, seizing his revolver, which had fallen from his hand and lay on the snow near him.

"Get out, girl, for I— Don't shoot me, for I cries quits!" and the man, who suddenly found a pistol-muzzle thrust hard against his face, quickly dropped upon his knees again.

"Here, Joseph, take this pistol and kill this man if he moves, for your horses are quiet now!" and Murielle thrust the weapon into the coachman's hands, and then hastened to the front, where just at that moment Alvan Judah had hurled his adversary to the ground and was forcing him into submission with his hand upon his throat.

"Can I aid you in any way, sir?" asked Murielle.

"Oh, lady, you should not have exposed yourself to this cold; but, as you have done so, if you will kindly hand me that pistol over there in the snow, I will bring this fellow quickly to terms."

Murielle seized the pistol, and the footpad at once cried for quarter, and with the check-reins taken from the harness the two men were soon securely bound.

"Now, miss, while you drive on home, I will lead these two villains back to the police station."

"No, sir, you will do nothing of the kind, for you escaped me once in just such a way and shall not do so again."

"Let them take the front seat, and Joseph can drive back."

This was done, and in a little while the two villains, recognized by the police sergeant as old offenders, were in safe quarters.

"But, sir, how is it we have not seen you here in answer to all our advertisements in the papers?" said the sergeant, recognizing Alvan Judah.

"I did not read the papers, sir," was the quiet answer.

"Well, we have a reward here for you, for killing that burglar captain and capturing one other."

"I do not care for blood-money, sir, so divide it among the officers you sent after the men."

"You surely do not mean that you will not take the reward?" said the surprised sergeant of police.

"That is just what I do mean, sir, for though I am poor, I will not live on money made through the death and misery of even burglars and convicts, so use the reward as you deem best."

"We will have to have your signature to that, sir."

"I will call and give it to you; now, as this lady has been exposed to the cold, she must hasten home."

The sergeant took the hint and said no more, and entering the carriage, it at once rolled rapidly homeward, for Joseph was all in a shiver, his nerves having been considerably shaken up by what had occurred.

After a rapid drive of fifteen minutes, the carriage drew up at the broad entrance to the Gaspar mansion, and Murielle ushered her guest into the warm and brilliantly-lighted library, where was seated the old Jew millionaire.

He rose to greet his daughter with a courtly grace which his years had not blunted, and turned with some surprise when he saw that she had brought home with her a stranger, for Emanuel Gaspar lived almost in the seclusion of a hermit.

After kissing her father, Murielle said:

"Father, I have found our hero, and in such a strange way, and while we were coming home he again placed both you and I under other deep obligations to him, for my carriage was halted by footpads, and but for Mr. Judah I would have been robbed."

Murielle had spoken rapidly, while Alvan Judah stood still in the shadow, for the drop-light on the center table did not fall upon his face.

The aged Jew, after greeting his daughter, had turned toward the stranger, and listening to her words in surprise mingled with alarm at her adventure, he started visibly as she called the name of Judah.

"Judah! did you say that his name was Judah?" he asked, quickly, and his voice slightly trembled.

"Yes, sir; my name is Judah—Alvan Judah," said the young Jew, in his distinct, pleasant tones.

"Ha! Judah! Alvan Judah! and v'ot vas your fader's name?" cried Emanuel Gaspar, excitedly.

"My father's name was Julius Judah, sir."

"And your mudder's was Huldah Lindo before she married Julius Judah, eh?" almost gasped the old Jew.

"My mother's maiden name was Huldah Lindo."

"Did you know my parents, sir?" asked Alvan Judah, greatly surprised at the emotion of the old Jew and his strange questions.

"Did I know dem? God of Abraham! did I not know dem!" came the ringing response of Emanuel Gaspar.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE OLD JEW'S STORY.

THE excited manner of old Emanuel Gaspar, the Jew millionaire, was an intense surprise to not only Alvan Judah, but to Murielle, for never before did she remember to have seen her father so excited.

A moment he glared upon the young man, and then continued, and in an excited way:

"So to you it ish dat I vas owe mine life, and the safety of mine riches, for those men when on trials confessed dat dey means to kill me, if I vas voke up, and then cover up their tracks by setting fire to the house."

"My safe is in mine rooms, and I would have surely awakened, for I sleep put lectle bit, and an awful end would have comes to me and mine child."

"Now it comes out so that you vas again save

mine child from some harm, and I was owe all to you, Alvan Judah.

"Ah mes, but you vas not know how hard it strikes me here to know this, for it punish me so much, oh so much," and Emanuel Gaspar sunk down in his easy-chair and covered his face with his hands.

"My dear sir, if there is anything in my name and presence that causes you pain, I pray that you allow me to at once depart," said Alvan Judah, moved by the old man's emotion.

"No! no! you shall not depart, you shall not go hence," and Emanuel Gaspar spoke now in the Hebrew tongue, which added to his dignity as much as his broken English detracted from it.

"You speak your own tongue, boy?" cried the old Jew, as Alvan Judah remained silent.

"Certainly, sir, for my parents were true Hebrews," was the proud response.

"Then listen to me while I tell you why you should not go away from here.

"It is because I have wronged you and yours.

"Here, child, you, too, shall hear the story of your old father, and knowing how I have sinned, you can forgive me, and my heart will be then at peace.

"Boy, you ask me if I knew your parents?

"You shall know how well I knew them.

"Your father, Julius Judah, was my boyhood companion, my playmate in old England, and we loved each other as we would have done had the same blood flowed in our veins.

"Your father came with his parents to America, settling in Boston, and with some money as a foundation to build upon, they accumulated wealth.

"Years after, I came to America, and I was poor; but your father, then studying the profession of medicine in a medical university, heard of my condition, and sent me a handsome sum with which to start in business.

"That money was the corner-stone of my fortune, and I prospered well, and your father settling in Baltimore, where I had established myself, began there the practice of his profession.

"He was handsome, rich and very courtly, so won many friends, and he made me his constant companion, and placed in my hands considerable money for investment.

"One day he told me that he had saved the life of a beautiful Christian girl, for while out riding her horse had taken fright, and run away through the streets and plunged off the dock into the harbor.

"Your father saw the danger of the girl, upon the drowning horse, and, springing into the water rescued her by tearing her skirt off, for it had become entangled in the hoofs of the struggling animal, and swam to the shore with her.

"Her home was a handsome one and her own, for she had inherited it from her parents, and dwelt there with her guardians, an old uncle and aunt.

"The news of the rescue spread through the city, and many a gallant beau envied your father for saving the life of La Belle Lindo, as they called your mother.

"Your father carried me up to call upon the lady, and from the moment I saw her I loved her, and, pardon me for saying so, I hated your father.

"I saw that the maiden loved him, and yet I dared hope to win her.

"She was a Christian, I a Jew; yet my love made me forget all else, even my friendship for the man who had done so much for me.

"At length rumor had it that a Jew and a Christian were to be wed, and the town was wild with excitement, while I was maddened with jealousy.

"Forgetting my honor, my creed and my friendship, I did all in my power to prevent the marriage.

"I learned that the maiden's inheritance was conditional.

"If she married contrary to the wishes of her uncle and aunt, the fortune left otherwise to her was to go to charity.

"I felt that she, knowing that your father was very rich, for his parents were then dead, and he had inherited their riches, would be willing to sacrifice her inheritance and marry him.

"In this I was not mistaken, for, eavesdropping one night, I confess my guilt with shame, I heard them pledge their love, and the maiden said she would sacrifice her fortune for his love, and he bade her do so.

"Nay, more, she told him she would not place him before the Hebrews in a false light, but would adopt his religion, that his creed should be her creed, his people her people, his God her God.

"Boy, I was maddened at this, and I determined to play my last card.

"If he was poor, I hoped she would cast him off.

"His wealth was in my hands, for he little dreamed of my treachery, made treacherous by love.

"I urged him to enter into an investment which I knew would swamp him.

"He bade me do as I deemed best, and I invested every dollar that I could get from him, by mortgaging his property and otherwise, and

two months after the crash came, and he had but his profession to depend upon.

"But, noble man that he was, believing that I, too, had lost my all, he laughed over his misfortunes and tried to cheer me up.

"And, Alvan Judah, instead of deserting him, your mother proved her worth by at once adopting his religion, becoming a Jewess and marrying him.

"It was more than I could stand, and I left Baltimore for England, and then went to Spain, and dwelt some years, making money wherever I went.

"In Spain I met the mother of my child.

"I was drawn toward her by her likeness to your mother, and she became my wife, and soon after we came back to America and I settled in New York.

"I wrote to Baltimore to find your father, for the still, small voice of conscience upbraided me, and I wished to return to him his fortune of which I had so deliberately robbed him.

"It was said that he had gone to Boston to live.

"I wrote there, to find that he had lived in that city but a short time and then gone to New Orleans.

"From New Orleans I traced him to Havana, and there I lost all trace of him.

"He had moved about on account of his wife's health, it was said; but, try as I did, I could not find him, and at last I gave it up, and making my will three years ago, the sum of which I had robbed him, and the interest thereon to the day of my death I devoted to charity, leaving my own fortune to my child here.

"Now you, the child of the man I so sinned against, appear before me, and I owe to you my life, my child's life, my fortune and all.

"You have heard my story, Alvan Judah, and I have told my child, also, of my sin.

"The sum I robbed your father of, for it was no better than robbery, was just fifty thousand dollars in all, and that was twenty-six years ago, so that you get six per cent. interest on that sum for that many years, making, with the principal, just one hundred and twenty-eight thousand dollars that I owe you, and which is in my business, but shall be taken out at your order.

"You are poor, young man, and I know it, and it gladdens my heart to do this in my old age, to make this amend to the son of my old friend, as I stand on the threshold of the grave.

"But, tell me, do your parents live?"

"No, Mr. Gaspar, they both died in Mexico," was the sad reply of Alvan Judah.

"Alas! peace be to their ashes; but they never knew how I wronged them, so they did not die cursing me."

"My father often spoke of you, sir, as did also my mother, and always with kindness and affection.

"Father made another fortune, and lost it in Mexico, and that left me poor; but I have a profession, that of the law, which I have been hoping to get a start in."

"You shall have, for this home of mine is your home, Alvan Judah, and here you must live with my child and myself, and for the present you must manage my business."

"May I ask the nature of the business, sir, that you are so kind as to wish me to manage for you?"

The old Jew at once dropped his Hebrew tongue and replied in broken English:

"I vas not known mineself in t'e pizziness, for I has von mans to manage for me; but he not honest vas, and if you vill close t'e pizziness up in t'e next year, it vill be pest, for you gets your monish, I gets mine, and ve has blenty to live mit, for I was very rich; put you vas see t'e pizziness vas not able to close up pretty quick, for it have last one year more, as t'e loans vas out for von year from December."

"I will do all in my power, sir, to aid you, and as you give me the money which you say is my just due, I accept it in the same spirit in which it is offered, though I hardly think I should take more than the principal."

"Alvan Judah," and the old Jew again spoke in the Hebrew tongue:

"Your father gave me the money that was the foundation of my present large fortune, and would never accept one cent in return.

"I took from him by false representations, fifty thousand dollars, and you are to take the interest on the amount with the principal; but, as I told you, my floating capital is all tied up in my business, and it will take just one year to draw it out, so I beg you to manage for me for that length of time, make your home with us, and when we close our partnership you have your own fortune to invest as you please and can follow your profession if so you desire, or still remain manager of my estates.

"Now, Alvan Judah, you know just how we stand to each other, and that I trust you most thoroughly, and I ask you to pledge yourself to do as I wish in this matter, for it will prove that I am forgiven for the past.

"Will you?"

The old Israelite held forth his hand, and grasping it firmly Alvan Judah said distinctly:

"I do forgive you all, Mr. Gaspar and I give the pledge that you ask."

"The God of Abraham bless you, my son," earnestly said the old Jew, while Alvan Judah

bent his head devoutly for an instant, and then asked:

"May I inquire the nature of your business, Mr. Gaspar?"

Relapsing into his broken English once more he replied:

"I vas a bawnproker, mine young fri'nt."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SPY AND HIS MASTER.

It was with a happy heart that Doctor Austin Travers rode homeward from Oak Ridge Farm after his acceptance by Cora.

He had remained to tea, and soon after had gone upon his professional rounds, to bid his patients farewell, and to transfer his practice during his absence to a brother physician.

It was late at night when he dismounted from his horse before his own house.

It was a pleasant little cottage home, with a well-producing, though small farm surrounding it, and the doctor had been quite happy there in his bachelor quarters.

Entering his room he called up his servant and began to pack a small trunk for his journey for he was to start at an early hour the following morning.

It was shortly after sunrise when he arose, and after a hearty breakfast with the Chicago attorney, the two set out to drive to the nearest railway station.

Arriving there the train was taken for New York, and, after a couple of days' stop there to attend to some business the doctor and his attorney departed for Chicago, neither of them aware that a man seemed to be deeply interested in their movements.

Unsuspecting of any one as he was, the doctor had failed to notice a red-faced, red-headed man who had driven up to the station in the country, just after the arrival of the lawyer and himself, and had bought a ticket also for New York, getting into the same car with them.

When they took a cab at the depot to drive to the hotel, the red-headed man had sprung into another, thrust a bank-bill into the driver's hand, and said bluntly:

"Follow that carriage, my man."

The driver obeyed his orders strictly, and drew up at the Fifth Avenue Hotel, just as the vehicle he had his eye on did the same.

Out sprung Austin Travers and the attorney, and registering their names they were at once shown to their rooms.

"Good!" muttered the one who dogged their steps, and returning to his cab he bade the driver put him out at a certain number on Houston street.

As the vehicle drew up before the door, the man sprung out, and hastened into a hallway, neither glancing to the right nor left, and wearing the look of one who preferred to avoid attracting attention.

Up to the third floor he went and inserting a pass-key into a door, he entered.

As he did so a man who was within sprung quickly to his feet, and said almost savagely:

"Well, Red Harry, you nearly got a bullet into you, entering as you did without giving the signal, for I thought some of John Boland's secret-service gang had me; but when did you arrive?"

"I just got here, and I didn't expect to find you in, cap'n, or I'd have signaled; but I bring some news I thought was important enough to come down and tell you about."

"Well, out with it, Harry, for I need good news, as matters went wrong with me," answered the one addressed as captain, and who was none other than the individual who had been captured by Alvan Judah in the Oak Ridge grounds, and released by Cora Keene, under a promise to bring important papers, criminating her brother, to her the following night.

"You've had no luck then, cap'n?" asked Red Harry, whose face was as full of villainy as a coconut of meat.

"I told you how that accursed Jew turned the tables on me, by his superior strength?"

"Yes, cap'n."

"Well, I felt sure he had picked up those papers, which I could have gotten a small fortune for, as I told you, and so I took the train to head him off, knowing he intended to walk to New York."

"I got a carriage and drove out until I met him, and then came back and laid my plans to kill him."

"But his accursed luck aided him, for I missed him, and he sprung upon me with a force that sent me to earth, but it pitched him over an embankment ere he could check himself, and I, hearing a vehicle coming, took to my heels, and so he escaped me, and I have been unable to find him since, as also have the police, for it seems he had, just before meeting me, saved the old millionaire Jew, Emanuel Gaspar, from robbery, killed one of the burglars and captured the other two."

"You don't tell me so, Cap'n?"

"He did, indeed, and he is a dangerous man to attempt to rope in; but what has become of him I do not know, for he does not show himself, and it is thought by the police that some of the burglar gang took quick vengeance upon him."

"Doubtless they did; but it's a pity you didn't get the papers."

"It is, indeed; but what news have you, Harry?"

"I'll give it to you as I knows it, and you can judge of it's worth."

"Well, out with it," impatiently said the captain, and added:

"It must be important to bring you here, after I left you there to spy out what was going on until I got back."

"Yer knowed ther young doctor up there, Cap?"

"Doctor Austin Travers?"

"Yes, Cap."

"What of him?"

"He have fell heir to a big fortin."

"Well?"

"The old Doc he come back, and the young Doc asked Cora ter marry him, and she consented, or her pa did fer her, and the young Doc have started West to git his fortin, which lies in Chicago."

"I cannot see that this is very important."

"You see his lawyer come out arter him, and told him some land there ad'jin' the city had riz in vally to a million dollars, so the Doc starts out to see about it, and to sell enough to bring him some fifty thousand or so, which, as I overheard him say, he would give to the old Doc to invest for him, and he are to bring it back in cash."

"Well?"

"I thought it were so well, Cap, that I jist tuk train with ther Doc and ther lawyer, and comed right here, they havin' put up at ther Fifth Avenue Hotel for a short time."

"You think there is something to be made out of this young doctor?"

"Well, we kin try."

"In what way?"

"Take the train with him to Chicago, watch him thar, and git ther little pile of money he gits thar."

"By Heaven, but you are level-headed, Red Harry, excitedly cried the more gentlemanly-looking of the two villains.

"I hain't often called a durned fool, Cap."

"Well, we must get on our disguises and take rooms at the Fifth Avenue, so that we start on the same train with the doctor and his lawyer."

"That's the game we have to play, Cap, and there's gold at t'other end of it," was the answer.

An hour after, the two men, well disguised, left their quarters, and the next night were flying rapidly toward Chicago in the same sleeping-car with Austin Travers and his attorney, who little dreamed how they were being dogged by two unscrupulous scoundrels.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SHADOWED.

DOCTOR AUSTIN TRAVERS arrived safely in Chicago, and found quarters at a leading hotel.

It took him some days to look over his Illinois property, find out the amount of taxes due, and get at the proper valuation of his lands which had so unexpectedly turned out to be of such great value.

There were acres of land here and there, in various parts of the State, all of fair value, and marketable at once, did he wish to sell, and these alone would have brought him quite a snug fortune.

But those which were the back-bone of his inheritance lay almost within the limits of the rapidly-growing city of Chicago, while within the business locality was a matter of several acres that were wanted at once by purchasers, and at a large sum.

So little had been paid for these lands originally, by the father of Austin Travers, that the young doctor had not even a knowledge of where they were situated, nor an idea that they would ever, in his lifetime, be worth much, and he had not even kept up his taxes on them.

But, with the growth of the city that must absorb them, a legal firm had looked up their ownership, made a map of the property, and started the junior member of the firm out in search of the lucky owner.

Having, upon his arrival in Chicago, gone over with Austin Travers the papers that proved his ownership to over a million dollars of property, with prospects of a rapid increase, the lawyers arranged for the sale for cash of certain lots which would pay all taxes due, their services, and bring into the hands of the young doctor something over sixty thousand dollars in cash, besides a yearly ground rent that would be a handsome income.

Greatly elated at his success, Austin Travers drew his money and deposited it for safe-keeping in the bank until the time of his departure for home should arrive.

As he returned to his rooms at the hotel, he was told that a gentleman was anxious to see him, and awaiting him in the reading-room.

Going there, he beheld a handsome young man, well-dressed, yet a trifle dissipated in his look, who arose and greeted him in a friendly way with:

"Is this Doctor Austin Travers?"

"Yes, sir; I am Austin Travers."

"Permit me to introduce myself, doctor, as

Richard Denmead, and I bring to you a letter of introduction from Miss Cora Keene, for I was at the Oak Ridge Farm only a few days ago."

The doctor's face flushed with pleasure, and he warmly shook hands with the man who had so lately seen the one he loved best in the world.

Glancing at the letter, Austin Travers read:

"As Mr. Richard Denmead, an old friend of our family goes to Chicago for a few days, and has stopped at Oak Ridge to make a short visit, I give him this letter to you, knowing that the acquaintance will be one of mutual pleasure, for Mr. Denmead is a gentleman whom we all esteem most highly."

Then followed more little gossip about home affairs, a report of Frank Keene's continued improvement, and the statement that they expected to go to New York city before very long, so that he must be sure and make them a visit there.

There was no jealousy in Austin Travers's composition.

Cora had promised to marry him, and he believed her, and so he greeted Mr. Richard Denmead most kindly.

He found the young man a genial soul, full of anecdote, a fine talker, and possessed of ample means.

Mr. Richard Denmead at once told the doctor of the business which had brought him West, which was to look after some lumber interests he held upon the shores of Lake Superior.

"When do you anticipate returning?" he asked the doctor.

"I expected to get off to-morrow, but, as you have arrived, I will spend a few days longer, if you think I would not be in your way."

"By no means; and more, I wish you would accompany me up on the lake, to where my lumber lands lie, for we can go by yacht."

"Indeed! I think I should enjoy a sail of that kind."

"Then I will go down to-day and charter a yacht for a week's cruise."

"I will store it with all that we need, get a competent captain and crew, and I know we will enjoy the run."

"You must allow me to share the expenses with you."

"By no means, for I would have to go by yacht, or lumber schooner, if I went alone."

"Then at least allow me to send the stores we need on board, or I shall not feel like going."

"Well, we will compromise on that," was the response of Richard Denmead, and then, as though a sudden thought had struck him, he said:

"What do you say, doctor, to keeping the yacht for a run to Detroit, and go on thence home?"

"I am willing, for there is nothing to detain me here."

"Well, I will arrange with the yacht's captain to take us there."

"The fact is, I will have to collect considerable money in the lumber region, and I wish to get home with it as soon as possible, for if I return through Chicago, I may be tempted to squander it, as I have my failings, like other men; but, going to Detroit, where I am not known, and thence on my way home, I can arrive with my collections intact."

"That would be the best under the circumstances, and it reminds me that I shall have a trifle over sixty thousand dollars to carry back with me."

"Get it in big bills and carry it with you, is my way, for I have had drafts on banks which have failed ere I could get the money out, and in these days of failures I do not trust them too long with my cash."

"You are doubtless right, so I will carry mine with me, as you do."

"Yes, for, see!" and Richard Denmead displayed a roll of greenbacks, the outer bill, as it caught the eye of Doctor Travers, showing that the face called for one thousand dollars.

Then the two friends dined together, and after the meal, while Richard Denmead went off to charter a yacht, Doctor Travers started out to buy stores, among which were many luxuries included for the cruise.

The next afternoon a pretty schooner yacht, of some thirty tons' burden headed out into the lake under a fair breeze, and upon her deck stood the two friends, Austin Travers and Richard Denmead, enjoying immensely the scenery of the city and shores, as the craft sped out upon the deep waters of Lake Michigan.

Upon the deck, besides the two referred to, were three persons, one of them being a red-headed, stout-bodied man who sat at the helm, and was evidently the skipper, and the others were the crew, for they were forward, watching the behavior of the little craft as she glided along.

Two weeks after the two seamen had brought the craft back into port, and their story was a strange one, for they said that they had run into a lonely harbor one afternoon, far from any habitation, and the skipper and two passengers had gone on shore for a hunt.

Night came and they did not return.

The morning broke and still the captain and his passengers remained away.

Then one of the two sailors had landed and gone in search of them.

He had hunted all day and finding no trace of the missing ones, returned to the yacht.

The following day his messmate went on a search, with like result, and, after waiting five days, they concluded that some terrible evil had befallen the party, so they got up anchor and headed back for Chicago.

It was a hard trip for the two men, but they arrived in safety, and having heard one of the passengers, whom his companions called Doctor, refer to a law firm in the city as his attorneys, the two men went to their office and told their strange story.

The lawyers were astounded, for Austin Travers had not spoken to them of making such a voyage, and they at once had the two sailors arrested, suspecting foul play.

Then one of the firm took the yacht with a new crew, and carrying the men along, told them to return to the spot indicated as the place where they had last seen the skipper and his passengers.

This they did, and landing, a thorough search was made, but the only result was to find a silk handkerchief having blood-stains upon it, and in one corner the initials "D. D." handsomely embroidered.

Returning to Chicago, the mysterious disappearance was made public, and Doctor Keene, as the friend of Austin Travers, was at once communicated with, and all the facts of the case placed before him, while large rewards were offered for knowledge of the missing party.

But weeks glided away, and not one word came of the mysterious disappearance of the yacht's skipper and his two passengers.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A PAWNBROKER BY PROXY.

WHEN the Jew millionaire made known to Alvan Judah the nature of his business, it was certainly a surprise to the aristocratic young Hebrew, who, at the least, had suspected Emanuel Gaspar of being a banker.

He had not expected that the dignified old gentleman belonged to that much-abused but very necessary class of business men, who, if they do charge a large price for loans, save many a family from going hungry, and others from despair, for jewelry, bric-a-brac, odds and ends, and other extravagances indulged in with a plethoric pocket-book, come in handy to "make the pot boil," when fortune smiles no longer.

Alvan Judah knew, as others know, that pawnbrokers were not naturally heartless, and that many an act of charity was daily done by them toward their, in many cases, poverty-stricken patrons.

But he had ambition to win a name as a lawyer, not in a business way, and, if driven to the latter from necessity, he regretted that he would have to be thrown for a year into daily contact with abject misery he could do little to alleviate.

But he had given Emanuel Gaspar his pledged word, and he would not break it.

He would continue his studies, the schooling he received behind a pawnbroker's counter would teach him much of human nature, that would be useful to him in the future.

So, in response to the assertion of Emanuel Gaspar, that he was a pawnbroker, Alvan Judah replied:

"I will do my duty, sir, by you, as I would by myself, and will be at your service whenever you wish me to commence office work."

"Mine fri'nt, I knows dat you vill pe a goot mans for t'e pizziness; but I vas vant you only to manage for me."

"Dat vas I vas to pe a bawnproker py proxy, vat you calls him."

"I vas haf three shops, von vas in Brooklyn, von vas down-town, and von vas up-towns, and dey vas pay me vell."

"I vas haf at t'e blaces mans to do t'e pizziness, put you vas to pe t'e managers for me and yourselves, you vas see."

"Now let us drop pizziness and haf some dinner right away quick, for you vas in your own home now, mine fri'nt."

Alvan Judah thanked the old Jew for his kindness, and followed a servant to his room, that he might make his toilet for dinner.

But his toilet was easily made, as his worldly possessions were upon his back, and his clothes were seedy.

But he freshened himself up as best he could, and they descended to the grand parlors, which were thrown open in honor of his presence, and where he heard Murielle singing.

Her voice was rich and full of pathos, and he felt touched by it when he thought of the sudden change in his fortunes which a few hours had brought, and remembered how he had, in almost despair, and the possessor of but five dollars in the world, been on his way to the depôt to start back to the little village where he had so nearly lost his life upon the gallows, and seek out his good friend, Landlord Loring of the New England Arms, and ask him to give him work.

He had utterly failed in New York to get into law offices as a copyist, and the little he had made barely kept him in food and lodging.

It was a year of hard times, suffering stalked

through the land, banks were failing, rich men went down beneath the crash of misfortunes, and but for that poor woman, robbed of her two dollars by a thief, and staggering against the iron railing for support, Alvan Judah's lot might have been a sad one indeed.

In one instant almost recognized by Murielle Gaspar, he had been snatched from the dregs of poverty and despair, to fortune and hope.

It was no wonder then that he stopped in the hallway, outside the parlor door, while his lips quivered with emotion, and gained control of himself ere he entered the superbly furnished rooms, with their luxury, paintings and statuary, and brightest of all the brilliantly beautiful girl, mistress of all, seated at the piano.

She had saved him, as it were, and it made her heart glad to feel that she had done so, and in her joy, like a happy bird, she poured forth her voice in song.

Rising from the piano as the Jew entered, Murielle took his arm and led him into the library, where her father awaited them.

Then the three adjourned to the dining-room, where the late dinner was discussed with the greater relish, and, in spite of his seedy clothes and poverty, both the old Hebrew and his daughter were charmed by the refinement of manner and ready conversational powers of their guest, and it was late before Alvan Judah sought his room to retire.

Then, with the freezing winds howling about the massive house, and the sleet dashing against the windows, he sunk to rest in a softer couch than he had known for many a long night before.

Awaking at an early hour, as was his wont, Alvan Judah dressed himself leisurely, glancing out the while at the icicle-hung trees and snow-clad earth, with the bright sunlight causing all to shine like burnished silver.

Descending to the library he was told by the butler that Mr. Gaspar and Miss Murielle breakfasted at nine o'clock, and it yet lacked an hour to that time.

The butler brought him the morning papers, however, wished him a Merry Christmas, and Alvan Judah sat down before a blazing fire to read the news.

Suddenly he started and turned pale as his eyes fell upon something in the paper he was reading.

It was headed:

"THE SUICIDE OF AN EMINENT MAN"

The very next lines that followed had told him who that eminent man was that had been driven to take his own life.

It told him also a strange bit of news of which he had been ignorant regarding the physician and his family.

With a heart that throbbed with emotion the young Jew read the story of the suicide, and it ran as follows:

"Doctor Hiram Keene, of our city, and until his retirement from practice some years ago, a man who stood at the head of the profession, last night took his own life, at the humble home where he moved two months ago, after the loss of his very large fortune, through speculation, some said, while others assert, that seem to know best, that it was swept away by the endeavor to extricate some dear friend from trouble.

"Be this as it may, it is certain that Doctor Keene was broken-hearted at seeing his fortune depart from him in his old age, and strove hard to retain his farm in New England, where he was wont to go with his family every summer.

"But this effort was also fruitless, and word being taken to the doctor by his attorney that the old homestead must also go, he seemed almost overcome, but soon after retired to his room, and, with a poison, the deadly effects of which he but too well knew, he put an end to his long and valuable life.

"Going to call her father to tea, his daughter found him dead, and lying on a table near was a letter, bidding his children farewell, and leaving sad regrets that his act had brought them such an unhappy Christmas.

"Miss Keene, though very young, is a lady of great force of character, and it had been her noble example and cheery nature that had kept the doctor up since his loss of fortune, and his son, who has been inclined to a wild life, from indulging in all kinds of dissipation, as rumormongers say.

"Miss Keene, her friends say, became the fiancée at the wish of her father, of the young physician, Doctor Austin Travers, who, discovering that lands left him by his father near Chicago, had suddenly made him a millionaire, went West to take possession of his fortune, and so mysteriously disappeared from sight several days after his arrival there.

"Our readers doubtless remember the excitement caused at the time, by the disappearance of the young doctor, who, it seems, joined a stranger, one Richard Denmead, upon a yachting cruise on the lakes, and landing with his friend and the sailing-master, at a lonely part of the shore, was never seen again.

"The crew returned with the yacht after some days' stay, and the doctor's attorneys instituted a most thorough search, but no trace of the missing ones could be found.

"As it was known that Doctor Travers had drawn out of the bank the large sum of sixty-three thousand dollars, in large bills, and carried this fortune with him upon his cruise, and a silk handkerchief, stained with blood, and having embroidered in one corner the initials

"D. D."

was found near where the party had landed, foul

play was suspected, though the detectives could get no other clue that they were able to trace to a successful solution of the mystery though the theory of one secret service man was that the physician had been tracked from his home by some one who knew why he went to Chicago, and that the strange yachtsmen who disappeared with him, were not his friends, but his foes, and robbers.

"This blow was a heavy one upon Miss Keene, followed as it was by the loss of her fortune, and now the bitterest stroke of all, her father's suicide, must indeed bow her down with deepest grief, and she has the sympathy of all in her dire afflictions."

Such was the article that met the eyes of Alvan Judah, that bright Christmas morning when happiness had come into his own heart.

It told him a strange story of what had befallen the brave girl who had confessed that she had killed the man in the woodland, and thereby saved him from the gallows.

It told him that the mysterious "D. D." still figured in deeds of outlawry, and that now Cora Keene was poor and friendless, and in need of sympathy and aid.

"Noble girl, she shall not want while I have it in my power to aid her, and more, I will not rest until I have cleared up the mystery surrounding her life and have hunted down D. D."

"I have so longed to act before, but my poverty kept me back, and, too poor to buy a paper I knew not that all this had happened."

"But now it is different, for Alvan Judah is no longer a pauper."

And he arose and paced to and fro in deep thought, until the entrance of Murielle put an end to his reflections.

CHAPTER XXV.

IN THE DEPTHS OF DESPAIR.

IN an humble home of New York city, sitting close to a wood fire, was a feminine form, clad in deep black.

The head was bowed upon her arms, which rested upon a small stand near her, and a wealth of golden hair fell in ringlets over her shoulders.

The room was poorly furnished, but everything about it was neat, and there was a home look over all.

The one so bowed in silent grief suddenly raised her head and the beautiful face of Cora Keene was revealed.

White, tear-stained and wretched was that face, its suffering almost marring its beauty, and the mouth had grown almost stern in the few months that had passed since last the reader beheld her at Oak Ridge Farm.

Now she was alone in the humble little cottage to which they had come, the father and his two children, after their break-down of fortune.

One week before, upon the day after Christmas, she had buried her father, and she was daily expecting the bill of funeral expenses, which she knew would take all the money she had left, plain as had been the last sad rites which she was able to give to the father she had loved so well, and who had committed suicide and left her to battle with the world, with only her willful, selfish and wild brother.

Suddenly a ring came at the door, and going to answer it, two letters were handed to her.

The one had a funeral look, for it had a hearse upon the envelope.

"The undertaker's bill," muttered poor Cora, and she broke it open with trembling fingers to note the amount.

It was a bill and receipted, while a line said:

"DEAR MISS:—Your bill, as you requested, I send you on this date: but receipt it in full, as a gentleman, who did not give his name, called in and paid the amount. Respectfully,

"SEXTON GRAVES."

"A gentleman called in and paid the bill?"

"Who can it have been?"

"Ah! it must have been Frank who— No, no, I cannot believe that he would pay father's funeral expenses with money won at the gaming-table.

"And besides, Mr. Graves knows Frank, so who could it have been?"

"I shall go down and see if I cannot find out, for this must not be."

Then she broke open the seal of the other letter and read the contents with increased surprise, while a bank check fluttered out into her lap.

The letter was short, but to the point, for it read:

"Will Miss Keene allow a debtor to pay an account which should have been settled before, by inclosing a check for five hundred dollars."

"No name to this! how strange; and it is a bank check, so I do not know the sender."

"It must be some one who owed my father, and his conscience now prompts him to send this money to me."

"Well, half of it is Frank's, though I dislike to give it to him, for if I keep it we can live for months on this sum, while my poor brother may squander his share in a night."

"Ah, me! if I cannot get pupils soon I will need this money, and I do not wish to begin to sell the jewelry I have left, for all I did not care to keep as souvenirs I allowed father and Frank to have the use of, and they pawned them, for by pawning anything, instead of selling it out

right, they say you can get the articles back again— Ah! there comes brother, now."

The door came to with a bang, a quick step was heard in the narrow hallway, and Frank Keene entered the room.

He was muffled up warmly, wore the best of clothes, a diamond sparkled in his neck-scarf as he threw off his overcoat with its sealskin collar and cuffs, and he looked little like a poor youth.

Tossing his sealskin cap upon the little table, he drew the lounge up before the fire, and throwing himself upon it in a half-reclining way, he said, abruptly:

"Well, Cora, what news?"

He looked very handsome as he lolled there at ease, and showed no trace of the severe injuries which he had received.

"Oh, Frank, you come to a poor place for news; and yet I have news for you," she added quickly:

"No funeral stories, sis, if you love me, for what with the loss of our fortune, Doctor Travers's mysterious disappearance, and father's death, I am getting as nervous as an old maid."

"Your late hours and dissipation make you nervous, brother," sadly said Cora.

"Don't preach, sis, but tell me the news you have for me."

"Well, I told the undertaker to send his bill in to-day, and it came, but receipted, for some unknown friend has gone in and paid it."

"Heaven bless the unknown friend, sis, for now the money you had to pay that somber old grave-digger you can lend me to try my luck with."

"We must live, Frank."

"I have no idea of dying, Cora, and for that reason wish a stake to win more money with."

"I would not eat a morsel of food you bought with money won over the gaming-table, brother," firmly said Cora.

"You are foolish, sis."

"From your standpoint, yes; but I have something else which I feel compelled to tell you."

"Out with it, sis."

"I received a letter inclosing a bank-draft for five hundred dollars, sent by some one who without doubt owed that sum to father, and, feeling sorry for us, has paid the debt."

Frank Keene was upon his feet now, and hastily reading the letter, he asked his sister for the draft, which she gave to him with the remark:

"Half of it is yours, Frank, though I wish you would let me keep it all for household expenses."

"It's genuine, sis, that is certain, and it's a godsend; but I need my share, and will get it cashed and give you the balance."

"Will you try at the bank to trace the sender?"

"Why?"

"Well, if it should be a gift of charity, I wish to know to whom I can repay it, should it ever be in my power to do so."

"All right, sis, I'll see if I can find out for you, and now, if you will just put your name on the back of this paper, I'll be off, for I came home to say I would not be up to dinner to-night."

"Must I again be alone, brother?"

"I hate to leave you, sister, but then I am working hard to get a situation, as you know, and I must meet the gentlemen I wish to see and get them to engage me."

"There, that makes this draft good, and I will bring you the balance."

"Good-night, sis— But one minute, for I wish a little change, so give me some to ride downtown with."

Cora handed out five dollars, and the selfish youth, who had only come home to beg money from his sister, who, with all his faults, idolized him, hastily drew on his overcoat and left the house.

Turning the first corner he came to, he found there awaiting him a cab, in which he had driven up home, and entering it, called out:

"Drive down-town with all haste, my man, for I wish to catch a bank before it closes."

CHAPTER XXVI.

A SCENE IN A "GAMBLING HELL."

IT was late upon the night following the day, when Cora Keene is seen in her humble home, with an aching heart, a thorn in her side from her brother's wild life, and yet brave and hopeful.

The scene now presented to the reader is a gorgeous one, for it is a suite of rooms in an uptown resort called by courtesy the "Sportsman's Paradise."

In reality it is a gambling hell, one of those glittering retreats where men are nightly ruined, and over the door of which might well be engraved the motto:

"He that entereth here
Leaveth hope behind."

The one in question was the most fashionable resort of this kind in the great metropolis.

It was situated within a stone's throw of the residences of the *élite*, and the shadow of a tall church spire fell upon its roof.

The house was a large one, the first floor being used as *café* and bar, the second floor

with its four rooms thrown into one was the *Salon de "Chance,"* and above were the sleeping rooms of the restless gamblers who were the leading spirits of this gorgeous abode.

Within the gambling saloon, at the time the reader enters it, was a young man at one of the roulette tables engaged in betting heavily and winning steadily.

By his side were stacks of red, white and blue ivory "chips," which represented money, and judging from the quantity there were piled up before him, he had won a large sum.

It was storming hard without, and this had prevented many from coming, so that the rooms held but few, while, the hour being late, many had already departed.

Perhaps a dozen players were present, and these were busily engaged in fighting for fortune at the *faro*, *roulette*, and *vingt-et-un* tables.

The young man referred to had not taken off either his heavy overcoat or sealskin cap, and stood with bowed head over the table, as though he wished to avoid attention.

It was no wonder that he sought to screen himself from view, because it was Frank Keene, and he was playing desperately at a gambling hell ere his suicidal father had grown cold in his grave, and while his mourning sister watched and waited at home for him.

The money he had brought there was the bank-draft his sister had given him, and which he had arrived at the bank too late to cash.

The banker at the Sportsman's Paradise had given Frank Keene fifty dollars' worth of chips, and held the draft, which lay upon the table by his side, along with a pile of money.

"You are winning largely to-night, Frank," said a young man who just then advanced toward the table, having lost his money over at the *faro*-bank.

Frank Keene glanced under his brows at the speaker and recognizing one of his associates, said in a low tone:

"Hello, Scott, how are you?"

"Yes, I am winning, as I always do, when I am not cheated."

The banker heard the reply, and remarked, quickly:

"You have, unfortunately for yourself, lost a great deal of money in here, Mr. Keene; but I hope you do not feel that you have been cheated, for though this is a gambling hell, it allows only square games, as all our patrons will readily admit."

"I will see how it goes with me to-night, and then answer whether it is a square game, for there are tricks in the *roulette* wheel now as well as at *faro*," was the remark of Frank Keene, whose face was flushed with wine.

The banker made no reply, and just then a gentleman walked up to the table and stood looking on.

He wore a cloak and slouch hat, was tall, erect, and had a dark, earnest face.

Taking off his cloak, he threw it across his arm, and holding his hat in his hand he gazed with seeming interest upon the game.

"Will you play, sir?" asked the banker.

"No, thank you," was the reply, and the game went on until Frank Keene had won an even five thousand dollars.

"You have been so fortunate, sir, I would advise you not to test your luck further."

It was the stranger who spoke, and Frank Keene glanced at him almost savagely as he replied:

"I generally use my own will, sir, in all pertaining to myself."

"As you please, sir," was the cool reply, and the stranger continued to gaze on the game with the same interest as before.

"Ha! he loses!" cried the stranger, in smothered tones, as the tide of fortune turned against Frank Keene, and he lost a bet of five hundred dollars on one whirl of the wheel.

Again he lost, and again, until he grew pale and nervous.

"Luck has gone against you, Mr. Keene, so you had better not play more to-night," said the banker.

"I need no advice, sir," was the youth's haughty response, and he continued to place his money, while the banker said coldly:

"Then if you lose do not accuse the house of cheating you, for you had a chance to quit just now a heavy winner, had you taken that gentleman's advice," and he referred to the stranger.

Frank Keene muttered an imprecation and continued to play, and also to lose steadily and surely.

At length his pile of chips diminished, and the youth, now strangely excited, cried:

"Give me the balance on my draft, Barksdale."

"No, Mr. Keene; I gave you fifty upon it and cannot cash it entire."

"Do you mean to say that I would give you bad paper?"

"Oh, no, only I will not take chances on drafts."

"By Heaven, man, you have cheated me and now insult me, and I shall have your life!"

The infuriated youth fairly shrieked the words, and as he did so he drew a pistol and leveled it.

Quick as a flash the stranger knocked the weapon up, and the bullet shattered a crystal chandelier, bringing down the fragments of glass in a perfect rain.

At the same moment the gambler banker had drawn a weapon in self-defense, and his pistol was also struck up by the stranger, and the bullet went crashing into the frescoed ceiling.

"Hold, sir! Would you kill the boy and bring the police upon your place?" cried the stranger, sternly, and the banker said, coolly:

"You are right, sir; but take him away from here."

"Give me your pistol, please?" said the stranger to Frank, who, instead of complying, seemed about to use it again, when it was seized and torn from his hand with a strength that showed him that, young athlete though he was, he had met his master.

"Now, Mr. Keene, you must come with me, sir," sternly said the stranger, and Frank Keene seemed to cower beneath his gaze, and said:

"That man has my draft."

"I gave him fifty dollars upon it, sir," politely returned the banker.

"Here is your money, sir, so pray give me the draft," and the stranger handed out the money.

Taking the draft he put it in his pocket, and then said firmly:

"Come, Mr. Keene, you must go home with me."

The youth seemed now wholly broken in spirit, and appeared to realize his murderous act, so he walked away with the stranger, who suddenly turned and said:

"Mr. Banker, name the damage done to your house and I will pay it, sir."

"Oh, let that go, for it might have been worse for both that boy and myself, but for you, sir, and I thank you for my life, and also for preventing me from killing that mad fool."

"No, no, sir, let the damage go to profit and loss, and consider Ned Barksdale your friend into Kingdom Come."

The stranger smiled and bowed, and hastened out of the room with Frank Keene, who now made no resistance, and acted as though completely dazed by what had occurred.

Reaching the street the stranger called a hack and gave the address to which to drive.

"How did you know my number?" asked Keene, in a low tone.

"The late afflictions you have met with made your address public, Mr. Keene," was the quiet response.

"And you also know me?"

"Yes, sir."

"I do not remember to have seen you before."

"No, we never met before to-night," and after this remark the two were silent until the carriage drew up in front of the little cottage house situated in a cross street far up-town.

"Here I will leave you, Mr. Keene, and let me give you your draft, and, as your sister's name is upon the back of it, beg that you give it to her."

"But I owe you fifty dollars of it, so, if you can, give me the balance."

"No matter about the little debt, sir, for that will come right sometime."

"You will give me your name and address, though?"

"No, for it is of no interest, Mr. Keene; good-night," and the stranger sprung back into the carriage which rolled rapidly away just as the door was thrown open and Cora Keene appeared in it.

A street-lamp burned right before the door, and, waiting up for her brother, Cora had not only seen his arrival, but had overheard all that had been said.

Hastening to throw a wrap on she ran to the door, but arrived too late.

"Brother stop that carriage!" she cried, eagerly.

But Frank was stubborn, and made no effort to do so, and the vehicle turned the next corner and disappeared from sight, while Frank entered the house and threw himself upon the lounge.

"Brother, that gentleman has aided you in some trouble to-night, I feel confident, and you owe him money, for I heard what was said."

"He refused to give you his name—"

"Yes; but he knew mine and my number," growled Frank.

"And I know his; yes, and I know now who our kind unknown friend is."

"You do, eh?" sneered Frank.

"Yes."

"Who is he, may I ask?"

"Alvan Judah, the Jew whom my act once so nearly caused to die on the gallows," was the low response of Cora, and her voice quivered with emotion as she spoke.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AN OLD JEW'S LUCK.

IF Frank Keene is supposed by the reader to have profited by his sad experience in the Sportsman's Paradise, he is mistaken, for that unworthy youth seemed to be under an evil spell which could be broken only by some fearful calamity.

He made up his mind, of course, that he would not drink and gamble more, and repentant for the time being, made his loving sister very happy by so telling her.

He told her of the scene in the gambling-rooms, just as it had occurred, and Cora listened with the deepest interest to all that he said.

"Brother, when Judah the Jew, was under trial for his life he was a very poor man; now, from what you tell me of him, he must be rich, and I believe that he it is who has sent us this draft."

"I will take it to the bank in the morning, sis, and trace it," said Frank.

"We must find him and pay the debt back, when we can."

"By going to the undertaker you can have him describe the gentleman who paid that bill, and if we find that it was Mr. Judah, then we are sure that he also sent this draft, and aided you to-night, though why he should be in that gambling-saloon, I cannot understand."

"He was not playing, sis, and merely stood by looking on."

"He prevented me from killing the banker, and I thank him for it, and then he kept Barksdale from shooting me, and I owe him my life."

"Then he paid Barksdale the fifty he had advanced me upon the draft, and drove me home."

"He wrenched the pistol from me as readily as though I had been a child, and he seems to have the strength of a giant."

"I don't like Jews, but I rather like that splendid fellow, and, if he's rich, would like to know him well," was the selfish ending of Frank Keene's remark.

"For shame, brother, to say that."

"If he was poor, and I could serve him, then I would rather know him; but, as it is, I must find him to return this draft and the fifty we owe him, for we do not need it just now, and I hope to get some painting orders soon."

Frank said no more, but rose and went to his room.

In the morning he took the draft and went down-town, to trace out the sender of it.

By diligent investigation he found that it was Alvan Judah, and more, the description given by the undertaker, of the gentleman who had called and settled the bill of Doctor Keene's funeral expenses, exactly tallied with the appearance of the Jew.

With the money in his hands, Frank Keene became reckless, and argued:

"Sis kept the Jew from hanging, so he ought to pay something for his life, and what he has done is little enough, for I'll guarantee he is rich, for whoever saw one of his race that was really poor?"

"I might also, and I believe I will, win largely, and then sis will be sure to forgive me."

"But I dare not go to the Paradise again, after my trouble with Barksdale, so I will look up another place."

"There is the Crystal Palace open to me, so I'll just write sis a note, saying I am detained, tell her I cannot trace the draft, and then go to Delmonico's to dinner and end up with a game at the Crystal."

The note was accordingly dispatched, the dinner was eaten, in company with a kindred spirit, Barney Scott, one of his intimates, and then the two, both under the influence of wine, adjourned to the "Crystal Palace," a gambling hell of less pretentious style than the Sportsman's Paradise.

Going to a *faro*-table Frank Keene began to play, buying at first but twenty dollars' worth of "chips," while Barney Scott, borrowing the money from his spendthrift companion, also made a purchase of a like number of ivory representatives of bank-notes.

As the game began, an old man, shuffling his feet along the carpet, as though age was telling upon him, entered the gambling saloon, and approaching the table, and addressing the dealer, said:

"Give to me some chips, if you vas po so kint."

The old man was a Jew, and his gray hair ill became such a place; but he seemed to have come there for such sport as he could get out of a gambling game, or to win perhaps from a love of gold.

"How many, sir?" asked the dealer.

"Call it fifty tollars," and he threw that amount upon the table, raked over his chips, and placed his bet upon different cards from Frank Keene and his friend.

The result was that the old Jew won and the two young men lost.

Again the game was played, the Jew once more winning, and Keene and his friend losing.

Several more games followed with a like result, and seeing his pile diminishing, Frank Keene turned angrily at the old man and said:

"Say, old Solomon, you are stealing my luck from me."

"I vas steal noddings, mine fri'nt, for I vas not play your cards," was the answer, and the Jew did not raise his eyes from the table.

"Play first then, and I'll follow you, so as to see the result," haughtily said Frank Keene.

The Jew placed his chips upon two cards, and Frank Keene and Barney Scott, after some hesitation, selected four others.

The dealer dealt quietly to the end, and the Jew had won, the young men had lost.

"Play again, old Isaacs," cried Frank Keene, and the Jew, paying no attention to the insulting command, quietly placed his bets.

"Now we have the bank," said the youth, and he and Barney Scott placed their chips upon the same cards which the Jew had covered.

The dealer drew out the cards, in his cool, quiet way, and the players failed to win, the bank raking in the money.

Again the Jew played, and again his bets were duplicated by the youths, and with a like result.

"Try him again, Frank, for there is luck in odd numbers," said Barney Scott, and for the third time the two youths followed suit, and again were the losers.

Muttering an imprecation through his shut teeth, Frank Keene said:

"Old graybeard, you have bewitched our luck; but we will play against your bets now."

This they did, and the Jew won, they lost.

And so it went on, the wonderful luck of the Jew keeping fast to him, excepting when the youths coppered his bets, and Frank Keene losing steadily, for Barney Scott was unable to borrow anything more from his friend, who preferred to lose his own money.

"Curse you, Jew, you have destroyed my luck, and I have to throw up the sponge, for I have no more money," said Frank Keene.

"Your credit is good, Mr. Keene, if you care to write out an I O U," said the dealer.

"Thank you, Mr. Fenton, I will get five hundred from you on my paper for a couple of days," said Frank, with assumed indifference.

"It must be two days, sir, if you say so, for I am prompt in such matters," responded the dealer.

The I O U was given and the game went on, the old Jew as before winning, the youth losing until his money was gone.

"I will play no more if you allow that Jew to bet," said Frank Keene, angrily.

"The table is free to all, Mr. Keene," said the dealer reprovingly, while the Jew said:

"I was vin all dat I wish, so I was stay and look at you lose your monish, young mans."

"Will you give me another chance, Fenton?"

"Yes; for another I O U."

"Make it for ten days."

"Two days, with one day grace, is my limit."

"All right; it will cramp me, but I can manage it if I lose."

And an hour after Frank Keene and Barney Scott left the gambling-saloon, the former having lost the amount of the draft and being in debt one thousand dollars to a man who he well knew would be merciless to him in regard to the payment of the money.

"My God! what will you do, Frank?" asked Barney Scott.

"My sister has some diamonds left, and she must help me out," was the heartless reply, and as the words were uttered the old Jew stepped up from the shadow of the doorway, where he had stood unnoticed by the two young men.

"Ha! I owe my ill-fortune to you, accursed Jew, and thus I punish you."

And Frank Keene raised his hand to give the Jew a ringing slap in the face, when his hand was suddenly grasped as though in an iron vise, and, as Barney Scott sprung forward to interfere, he received a full blow in the face that sent him flat upon his back upon the pavement.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A THREAT.

NEVER were two youths more mistaken, than were Frank Keene and Barney Scott in the Tartar they had caught in the old Jew.

In his grasp Frank found himself powerless to move, while Barney Scott crawled out of reach of his foot on his hands and knees, and then straightened himself up ready for flight, if it should prove necessary.

"Here, young mans, I was a detective, and I knows you vell and has my eyes on you, so pe-gones pretty quick!" cried the old Jew, and leaving his companion in misfortune in the hands of the enemy.

"Mr. Keene, I was going to give you a leetle advice, and I want you to take it vrom a fri'nt," said the old Jew, speaking earnestly.

"I do not acknowledge any friendship between us, old man," was the impudent response.

"May pe that you was change your mind; put anyhow, you vill hear v'ot I has to say in private, or if you don't, it vill pe said right oud before a police court."

"V'ot you say, young mans?"

Frank Keene turned pale at this threat, and said with as much ease as he could command:

"Well, what have you to say?"

"I haf to say, mine fri'nt, dat you was give your fader mooch troubles, and he is only a short time dead py his own hands, and yet you was go to gambling-blaces and lose monish dot was not your own."

"Your sister was vera sick at home, and you was make her heart ache mit much foolishness as you was doing."

"My actions are none of your business, Jew."

"Oh, yes, dey was my pizziness, and don't you was fool yourselfs that dey was not."

"What have you to do with me?" asked Frank, considerably cowed by the man before him.

"I was vant to keeps you out of t'e jails."

"Out of jail?" gasped the youth.

"Dat was v'at I said, mine fri'nt; out of jails."

"I have done nothing to be sent to jail for."

"You knows petter, mine fri'nt, for to-night you was get one t'ousant tollars on false brentens."

"How?" came the whispered query.

"Your fader was leaves you nodings, and you was haf nodings, and yet you was got one t'ousant tollars from t'e gambler mans on t'e promise to pays him back."

"And I can do it."

"Vere ish t'e monish?"

"I will get it."

"Vill you rob your sister some more?"

"Ha! do you accuse me of robbery?" angrily cried the youth.

"I was knows vat I says, mine fri'nt, and don't you was speak so loud if you don't vant to finish our leetle talks in brison."

"I am no thief," growled Frank.

"You was a forger of checks and notes, and you was rob your fader and your sister, and I knows all about it."

"It is a lie!" gasped the youth.

"It was truth so solemn as de vord of Abraham," was the deep response.

Frank shuddered at this, for his conscience would not sustain his bluster.

"Mine fri'nt, I was know dat you did forge some bapers some times ago, and dey was in de hands of von who means you vell, put who vill use dem pretty quick, if you was not do as I says."

"Well, all this means some plot against me, so out with it."

"T'e plot was to saves you from yourselfs, mine fri'nt."

"I can take care of myself without your aid, or that of anybody else."

"Vell, you has not done so, for you haf done that v'ich would put you in jail right away."

Frank winced at this, and said:

"Well, out with it, for you wish me to buy you off."

"Name your terms, but go low, for I have no money."

"I do not want your monish, young mans, put I do want to make terms."

"Well, out with what you have to say."

"I haf that to say that you must buy t'e monish that you was got from t'e gambler mans."

"I intend to do that."

"I don't was know how, put I vill see."

"It is none of your business, old man."

"I was make it my pizziness, young mans."

"You'll get the worst yet of interfering in other folks' affairs."

"I was take t'e chances on that."

"What else have you to say, for I must be off?"

"I haf to say that if you was go into another gambling-house in this city, if I was to know that you was to play cards for monish, and if you don't was got some work, right away quick, I vill have you arrested and sent to brison as a forger mans, a thief, and upon other charges I was able to bring against you."

"Do you was hear my terms, mine fri'nt?"

"And you dare threaten me thus?"

"I was."

Frank Keene was in a desperate situation and he knew it.

He felt that the Jew was his master, and how to extricate himself from his unfortunate position he did not know.

The terms of the Jew were certainly not very severe, he thought; but what it mattered to the old man, a total stranger to him, whether he went to the bad or not, he could not comprehend, so he determined to ask.

"Why do you take this interest in me?" he asked, bluntly.

"I was take no interest in you, young mans; put I was know your beoples and feels sorry that you was so pad on their account."

"You was started straight for t'e benitentiary, and I was vish to stop you, to give you a chance."

"If you don't was take it, den you vill pretty soon be in brison, so I asks you vat you was intend to do apoud it?"

"I have no desire to go to prison, or even to risk the chances of your sending me there, which I don't doubt your ability to do, so I will agree to your terms."

"You was bledge me your honors that you was not play cards any more, drink, or enter t'e blaces vere pad mans was, vile you was got a blace to work pretty quick and becomes a goot young mans?"

"If I give you such pledges you will surrender into my hands the papers of which you speak?"

"No, I was keep dem, dat you may not preak your vords."

"If I refuse to make such a pledge, Jew?" was the haughty question.

The old Jew thrust each hand into a pocket of

the capacious coat that he wore, and brought them out again, each grasping something.

The "something" that each held were a pair of handcuffs and a revolver, while the Jew said slowly:

"I was ready to take you now, mine young fri'nt, to de brisons."

Frank Keene shuddered visibly.

He was mastered, and said quickly:

"I make the pledge, Jew."

"Dat was all right, mine fri'nt; now I was drive you home, put don't you forgets t'e bledge, for you vill be vatched pretty close, and off you vill go to t'e jail."

As he spoke the Jew hailed a hack that was passing, ordered Frank Keene to enter it, and following him, the driver drove off to the address given him.

As Frank Keene dismounted before his door, the Jew said:

"You was have my varnings, young man, and don't you was forget it."

The youth made no reply and the vehicle drove swiftly away.

Again was Cora up awaiting her brother, and seeing that he had been drinking, and feeling that he had broken his pledge to her, she cried out in the anguish of her heart:

"Oh, Frank! my poor misguided brother, you are killing me."

Frank Keene stood abashed, though not so much from his sister's grief as at what he had just passed through.

He felt that his misdeeds were known, and more, that there were papers in existence that would be used against him.

Forced to reform, he was therefore determined to do so.

His face was white, and seldom had his sister seen him look as he did.

Relying wholly upon her to help him, he must at once play his part well to get her to do so.

"Oh, sister!" he groaned, as he sunk down by the table in the little sitting-room and buried his face in his hands.

"Well, Frank?"

"I am indeed a sinner, but I have received a lesson this night which will last me."

"I fell from grace, for when I drew the money on that draft, I met Barney Scott, and—"

"Barney Scott will yet go the way of your other intimate friends, Macy Belden and Richard Denver, and a way which it seems my brother is also destined to go," said Cora, sternly.

"Well, sis, I intend to make a clean breast of it, confess all, and then throw myself upon your mercy, for if I have your contempt, I also deserve your pity."

"No, Frank, I feel no contempt for you, and God knows I pity you; but now you seem indeed to be in earnest, when you say you will reform."

"I am, sister, as you shall know, when you have heard all."

Then in a voice moved by deep emotion, or the semblance of it to gain his point, he told Cora how he had drawn the money, dined with Barney Scott at Delmonico's, and then how he had, under the influence of wine, gambled the money away, and hoping to win it back had gone deeper into the mire and given his I O U for one thousand dollars, which must be at once paid.

Cora was shocked, for a few hundred was all that she had in the house.

"What will they do with you, if you do not pay them right away, Frank?"

"Arrest me for getting money under false pretenses, as they claim."

"Oh, Frank! this must not be, for I can prevent it."

"You, sis?" asked the youth, in feigned surprise.

"Yes, for I have some diamonds left, which, though I would not sell, I can borrow money on."

"Oh, sister! but are they worth that much?"

"They were my mother's, Frank, and I know not their value; but I certainly have enough to raise the thousand dollars with."

"Well, I will take them to a pawnbroker tomorrow and see."

"No, Frank, I will take them myself."

"You?"

"Yes, and more, I will pay the money you owe."

"But, sis, it is to a gambler."

"He can be no worse than you, and I will see him, make a plausible excuse, and pay him."

In vain did Frank Keene urge to the contrary for Cora was firm, and so it was decided that she should pawn the jewels and pay the due-bills to the gambler.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE PAWNBROKER.

AFTER a pleasant day and another night, passed in the elegant home of Emanuel Gaspar, the Jew millionaire, Alvan Judah signified his readiness to go to work.

The morning after Christmas Day, therefore, the carriage was ordered, and Emanuel Gaspar drove his young friend down to the police court to appear against the two footpads, and this being attended to, they went the rounds of the three pawn-offices belonging to the wealthy old Hebrew.

The three gilt balls hung over the door of each, and then there was the sign, in large letters:

"EMANUEL. PAWNBROKER."

"Liberal allowances made upon all kinds of personal property at a fair interest and a year's time."

Entering the shops, in each one Alvan Judah found a back office well furnished and comfortable, and a glance was sufficient to show him that Mr. Gaspar, under the name of Emanuel, did an immense business, for a steady stream of customers were continually pouring in and out of the shop, which was by far less dingy and forbidding than is customary with such places.

There was a clerk each in two of the places, and in the third, which was the largest of the three establishments, there was a bookkeeper and an assistant.

The former was a man of middle age, with a cunning, gloomy face, and the look of one who took little pleasure in life.

"Mr. Jacobs, this gentlemen ish my partners, mine fri'nt, and vill take t'e management of t'e blaces instead of yourself, who vill pe t'e bookkeeper, spending two days mit each shop," said Mr. Gaspar, introducing Alvan Judah.

The latter bowed politely, while Mr. Jacobs merely bent his head sullenly, and said:

"I was not aware that you had to take a partner, sir."

"Nor vas I, Jacobs; put it vas my vish so to do, and so carry out my vishes, and this shentilmans is to take full charge, so report to him and not to me."

"You vas understand, Jacobs?"

"Not clearly, sir," was the sullen reply of the man, who hated to have a new master, who would hold him accountable, where, with Mr. Gaspar he had pretty much had his own way.

"Vell, Jacobs, if you don't vas understand, I vill have to explain more," said Mr. Gaspar, somewhat impatiently.

But Alvan Judah saw the situation at a glance, and knew that Jacobs was not only jealous of him, but fearful of being found out in certain transactions he had made upon his own account, little dreaming that he would have to answer to any one for so doing.

So the young Jew said quickly:

"As Mr. Jacobs is so very obtuse, he is hardly the right man, Mr. Gaspar, to have take charge of the books of a business which seems as large as yours, so perhaps I had better overhaul his accounts, and look up some one else."

Mr. Gaspar saw that Alvan Judah was talking for effect, and provoked with Jacobs for his morose manner, he was glad to see the young Jew take the initiative as he did, so said:

"You vas t'e one, mine fri'nt Alvan, to do as you please, and if Jacobs, or t'e others do not suit you, just let 'em go away."

Instantly Mr. Jacobs became obsequious, and bringing a smile to his ugly face, he said in a cringing way:

"Oh, gentlemen, I hope you did not misunderstand me, for I wanted to know fully about this sudden change, and so asked that I might be the better instructed."

"Mr. Judah, I am happy to congratulate you upon becoming the partner of Mr. Gaspar, who has been the best employer I ever knew, and I have served him faithfully for fifteen years."

"Well, Mr. Jacobs, you remain here as bookkeeper only, and whether you remain another fifteen years depends wholly upon yourself."

"Now set to work as soon as you can, and have all the books ready for my inspection, for I shall commence my management without delay," and Alvan Judah's manner showed Jacobs that he was to have a master who would stand no trifling, and until sunrise the next morning he was poring over his books, making them balance properly, though to do so he had to draw upon the snug little bank deposit which he had put away to his own account, and which had been growing from the charges he put down to "profit and loss."

"There's years of savings gone, by this partner coming in, and I am thousands poorer than I thought I was, while, with that man my master, I see no chance to make a dollar now above my salary."

When Alvan Judah came down to the office, the next morning at nine o'clock, he found Jacobs at his desk, and greeted him with a pleasant:

"Good-morning, Mr. Jacobs."

Jacobs was all smiles, and walking into the inner office, said:

"Mr. Judah, the books are at your service, sir, as they are, and I feel that you will find no mistakes in them, though I would rather have had time to look them over."

"And you have not done so, Mr. Jacobs?"

"No, sir."

"Do you keep a light burning in the shop at night, Mr. Jacobs?"

"No, sir, for it is not necessary."

"Then some burglars must have been in here, as I saw a light in the shop for a while, and until daylight it burned in this back office."

Jacobs was thunderstruck.

He felt that he had an eye upon him which he could not dodge, and he knew not what to say, and Alvan Judah continued:

"Of course, not being very familiar with your city, I may be mistaken; but I have taken rooms

not far away, and walking out thought I detected a light in here, so, fearing trouble, placed a detective to watch the place until this morning, and I am glad that nothing was taken."

"Now I will look over the books."

This duty kept Alvan Judah for several days, and he had just about finished his task, when suddenly he started, as a voice fell upon his ears that seemed familiar, and his face flushed and paled by turns.

It was a woman's voice, and it said:

"I have brought these diamonds to pawn, sir, for I need some money very much."

A silence followed, while the clerk, a young Jew, looked them over carefully and asked:

"How much you vants on dem?"

"One thousand dollars," said the familiar voice again, and instantly Alvan Judah arose to his feet and stepped nearer to the little window that looked into the shop from his office.

"I cannot gif you so much."

"Oh, sir, I must have that sum," pleaded the voice.

"Den bring more somedings dat I gif you it on," was the callous response.

"Alas! I have little else to bring."

"Vell, I can do no more."

"How much will you lend me, sir?"

"Five hundred dollars vas all."

With a sigh the owner of the sweet voice was turning away, when from within came the call:

"Simon, come here!"

"Yes, sir," and the young clerk darted into the office.

"Call that lady back and give her the money she asks for."

"She hash gone, and dey vas not wort' more dan six hundred tollars."

"Did you hear me, sir?" was the stern response, and Simon darted out after Cora Keene, for she it was, glad to escape from beneath the angry eyes of his master.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE PAWNED DIAMONDS.

WHEN Simon, the young pawnbroker ran out after Cora upon her departure with a sad heart from the shop, he found her walking slowly along in deep meditation.

She felt that if she could borrow only five hundred dollars on the diamonds, she must draw upon the money she had at home, and which was her all, and even then she would not have enough by a couple of hundred.

She had little more at home to pawn, but what she had she would bring, and if that was not enough Frank must then make some sacrifice and part with his diamond studs, for she would have done all that lay in her power.

In this painful reverie she was interrupted by the breathless Simon, who called out:

"Come back, mish, and I gif you some more monish."

With a glad heart Cora followed the young Jew, and again handed over her diamonds to him.

He glanced at them once more cautiously and, convinced that he had offered all that was proper under the circumstances, he said:

"I takes them one minits."

Then he handed them to Alvan Judah who stood just inside the office-door, with the remark:

"Dey vas not wort' it, sir."

"Give that lady the sum she asks for," was the whispered but stern rejoinder, and Simon went back to his post and in a confidential way said:

"Vell, mish, since I look at dem over once more, I vas gif you t'e t'ousant tollars."

"Oh, sir, from my heart I thank you."

This burst of gratitude had no effect upon Simon, who took the diamonds, attached a card to them, and then made out a ticket which he handed to Cora, along with the money, which he thrice carefully counted out, for he was not one to make mistakes against himself.

"You will be careful with the diamonds, sir, will you not, for I prize them very dearly."

"Oh, yes; I vas always careful."

Taking her money Cora hastened away, and glancing at a card she held in her hand, wended her steps toward one of the cross-streets at a point near Broadway.

Ascending the steps of a mansion, she rung the bell and asked the one who answered it:

"Is Mr. Fenton in?"

"Yes, miss," responded the negro, and he ushered her into a room which at first she mistook for a parlor, but soon discovered was the gambling-saloon, by the faro, roulette and other tables that stood about.

Now, in broad daylight it was deserted.

Mr. Fenton soon came in, having just arisen, and tried hard to penetrate the thick veil that covered Cora's face, and which had hidden it also from Simon's penetrating glances.

"Mr. Fenton, I believe?"

"Yes, madam," and the gambler bowed in a courtly way.

"May I ask if you hold a notesigned by Frank Keene, and due to-morrow?"

"I hold two I. O. U.'s, madam, signed by Mr. Frank Keene, and due to-morrow, and they are for the sum of five hundred dollars each."

"I thank you, sir; and I have come to take them up."

"Here is the amount they call for, which I have brought, as it was not possible for my brother to come."

"I thank you, Miss Keene, and here are the due-bills, and I trust your brother will not again force his sister to transact such an unpleasant duty for him," said the gambler, warmly.

Cora bowed, took the due-bills, and departed, her heart happy at saving her brother's honor.

After a few slight purchases, which were needed, she returned home, and was handed a sealed package by her negro maid, who, in her misfortunes, had not deserted her, and now served as maid-of-all-work.

"A messenger brought this, Missy Cora."

"What is it, Lucy?"

"Dunno, missy, but he says it was intensely valuable, and I s'pose it is."

Cora threw off her outer clothing, and seating herself at the little table, broke the seal.

What she beheld caused her to start with amazement.

"My pawned diamonds!" she said, in a slow, trembling voice, as she saw the case returned to her, with the diamonds intact, which, but a couple of hours before she had pawned.

"What can it mean?" she murmured.

Then her eyes fell upon an official-looking envelope, also a part of the contents of the package.

Breaking this open she discovered an envelope addressed to her, and a number of papers that had a financial look to them.

Opening the letter addressed to her she said:

"This may clear up the mystery."

The handwriting was evidently disguised, and this fact she quickly noticed.

Half-aloud, slowly, and taking in every word, she read the letter, which was as follows:

"Will Miss Keene allow me to prove to her that in all her trials and deep afflictions she has one friend who will not desert her, one who, though he must remain unknown, is watching over her with the care he might bestow upon a loving sister?"

"Hoping that she will so feel and believe, and that she will keep the secret of this unknown friend's interest in her from her brother, I will make known to her that I act only from purest motives in befriending her, and in striving to prevent her brother from going on the road to ruin which he seems so anxious to take."

"Knowing Miss Keene's adversities, and seeing her enter the pawnbroker's this morning, I learned what took her there, and therefore took the liberty of at once redeeming her jewels, and hereby return them to her, begging her to accept them."

"That she paid the gambling debts of her brother I am also aware; but that Frank Keene might act from fear, if not for self-respect, honor, and the love he should have for so noble a sister, I demanded of him a pledge not to enter another gambling-saloon in this city, or to gamble privately, or drink."

"I forced this pledge from him last night through the papers within, which tell their own story."

"I am sorry that they tell of a brother's shame to a sister, one so pure and devoted as you have been; but they are papers which were to be held (as you see by a letter within written to the former holder of them by a confederate in villainy) over your brother's head, and thus used were to force from him, your father and yourself, a large sum to get possession of them."

"As I understand the private memoranda within, the notes and checks inclosed were forged by your brother and taken up before they reached the eyes of those whose names were thereon forged."

"The party taking them up did not do so to save your brother, but to get possession of these papers to use against him, and thereby force money from him when the proper time came to do so."

"This man I know only as 'D. D.', but he has a confederate in guilt, whom the memoranda speaks of as having been one Macy Belden, and who was an escaped convict, killed by your own hand in the roadway near your father's farm up the country."

"This same memoranda, which takes almost the form of a diary, came into my possession, it matters not how, and no other eye has seen these tell-tale papers."

"Knowing their power for good, if properly used, I forced the pledge of reform from your brother, by telling him that they were in my possession, and I should be brought out against him if he failed in his promise."

Now, as I have no idea, nor ever had, of using them against him, I send them to you, that you may destroy them, for they are of too dangerous a character to have about, as they tell their own story."

"Still, after reading them and destroying them, it would be as well to let your brother know that you are aware of their existence, and will confront him should his conduct demand it."

"In conclusion, let me say that if your brother will report to the firm of Calhoun, Clinton & Company, of Broadway, he will find a situation open to him in their office, which will certainly pay household expenses, if no more."

"Now with every wish for your happiness, let me sign myself your

UNKNOWN FRIEND."

Thrice did Cora Keene read this letter over, and then she turned to the telltale papers of her brother's sin.

These she put into the fire and watched them burn to ashes with an expression of delight upon her face.

Then she looked again at her diamonds, and turning once more to the letter, said with deep feeling:

"Disguise his hand as he may, I recognize the same writing that was in the letter inclosing me the five-hundred-dollar draft."

"Yes, and the undertaker described the one who paid that bill, and I know that my unknown friend is none other than Judah the Jew, and find him I will!"

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE TWO LETTERS.

THE coil of circumstances, that was gathering around Frank Keene, day by day, convinced him that, *volens volens*, he had to mend his ways.

Since he was fifteen years of age he had had his way, and he certainly looked then as much the man as most youths of twenty.

His manners, when he wished them to be, were elegant and dignified, and at all times he was reserved, so, in spite of the striking likeness between himself and sister, and their being twins, most every one deemed him several years her senior.

Although he could turn out a very respectable beard, he had no ambition or vanity that way, and wore his face beardless, though Cora joked him often for so doing, by telling him it was because his dimpled chin and handsome mouth, girlish in expression, were so much admired.

His hair was red-gold in hue, curling, and in fact he was a very handsome youth, and would have been greatly admired but for his evil course, which caused him to run recklessly into debt, gamble, and commit all kinds of sins to extricate himself from the dangerous positions into which he plunged without thought of the consequences.

When he found himself brought up with a round turn by the old Jew, after leaving Fenton's gambling-rooms, and then refused the diamonds to pawn, and to be allowed to pay his debt, by his sister, he felt that he must turn over a new leaf.

Cora certainly had nothing more to pawn for his reckless dissipation, and, with forged papers hanging over his head, and the knowledge that he was watched, he determined to put the best face possible upon the matter, and pretend a reformation he did not feel in his heart.

With this intention, however, he came home to dinner in good time, appeared cheerful, and said:

"Sis, I have hope of getting work."

This was the same old story, and Cora was confident that Frank had no better prospects than before, so said:

"Frank, if you will go down in the morning to the firm of Messrs. Calhoun, Clinton & Co., on Broadway, you will find employment."

"Indeed! How do you know this, sis?"

"Some one that knew you needed a place, sent word here for you to go there."

"Guess it was a hoax, sis."

"You can at least go and see."

"I will do so to-morrow some time."

"No, go at once after breakfast."

"Well, to please you, I will, but I have no hope that it will turn out anything."

"I have," was Cora's quiet reply, and then she continued:

"Frank, I pawned the diamonds to-day that mother left me."

"Well?"

"I was offered a low sum at first, but the man saw that I evidently needed money very much, so gave the price I asked."

"How much?"

"One thousand dollars."

"Why did you not strike him for more?"

"Because I wished no more, for I have some money, as you know, in the house, and with what I got I paid your debt of one thousand."

"Ha! you saw Fenton?"

"Yes, I went to his house, asked for him, and when he came in, told him as it was impossible for you to come, I did so."

"Here are your notes."

"Did he say anything to you?" nervously asked Frank.

"Yes, he said that he hoped my brother would not place me in a like painful position again."

Frank muttered something that was inaudible, and Cora continued:

"Now, Frank, you will get a situation with Calhoun, Clinton & Co., I am certain, and I shall paint pictures for a living, so that we can get along nicely."

"I sent two of my paintings to the art rooms yesterday, and hope they will bring me something, for I know that they are not bad, and the celebrated artist, you remember, who stopped several days at Oak Ridge Farm, Mr. Ernest Galvan, said they were perfect gems, though he may have meant to flatter me—Ah! there is the postman's ring."

Cora went to the door, and soon came back with a smiling face, and a letter in her hand.

"How strange, brother, that so often, when we speak of persons they appear, or something connected with them comes up before us."

"Well, sis, what does all this mean?"

"Simply that here is a letter from the art rooms about my paintings, and look, brother, a check!"

With trembling hands Cora held the letter to the light, and read as follows:

"MISS CORA KEENE:—

"Inclosed please find our check for three hundred dollars (\$300.00) in full, less our commission, for your two companion paintings—viz:—

'THE SOLDIER'S FAREWELL,'

AND

'THE SOLDIER'S GRAVE,'

which were purchased by a gentleman this morning.

"Let us say that we highly appreciate your artistic work, and have other orders for you, so kindly send in anything you may have on hand."

"With respect,

"DES BROSSES & Co.,

"Art Rooms."

"Oh, brother! I did not believe that they would bring one-third that money."

"Thank Heaven! we will not starve," and tears filled the beautiful eyes of the happy girl, a ray of sunlight among the somber shadows that surrounded her life.

"Sis, I congratulate you with all my soul," said Frank, earnestly, and he meant it, for if his sister could make hundreds of dollars in a few weeks' work, he saw chances ahead of him to idle his life away.

"Have you not another letter there, sis?" asked Frank, as he saw Cora gazing in rapture at the check, which was a proof positive that she was not a cipher in the world.

"Yes, three hundred dollars, and now I can soon pay back the debts I owe," muttered Cora, communing with her own thoughts.

"What debts, sister?"

Cora flushed, and said quickly:

"The diamonds, of course, and the bill for poor papa's funeral."

"Oh, yes; but there is another letter there which you have not noticed."

"Oh, yes, and it has a foreign post-mark upon it, and went to Oak Ridge Farm, and was forwarded from there."

"Brother, it is addressed to father," she said, as she gazed at the envelope.

Frank started, for superstition ran deep in his nature, and he said hastily:

"It is bad luck to open a letter addressed to the dead, sis, so throw it into the fire."

"No, brother, I will do no such foolish thing, for it may be of great importance."

With this she broke the foreign seal upon it, took it out, and glanced at the head-lines.

"Oh, brother! it is from uncle Gordon."

"What! father's brother who went to China before we were born?"

"Yes, and whom father tried so hard to find, fearing that he was ill in a strange land and needed aid."

"Well, read the letter, for I expect he is as poor as a country parson and has come home to live off of us in his old age."

"For shame, brother, for if he did, I would gladly care for him, and he would be a second father to us."

"One father is enough," growled Frank, while Cora began to read the letter aloud:

"HONG KONG, CHINA, September 2d, 18—.

"MY DEAR BROTHER HIRAM:—

"It has been just twenty years to-night since I bade you farewell on the good ship that bore me to a foreign land."

"I left home then under a cloud, for I was never guilty of the act that father accused me of, and which he found out, years after, that I was innocent of."

"You trusted in my word, and your friendship clung to me to the last; but when I left home I swore that I would never return until I was a rich man."

"Through certain sources I have kept informed of matters at home, and you have my sympathy in the loss of your dear wife, and my congratulations that you have two loving children to make your home blessed."

"Now, brother, I know how hard you have tried to find me, and of your sending me money, all of which I have not accepted for I did not need it, as from the day I left home I have led an upright life and prosperity has come to me."

"I am a very rich man, and I am unmarried, so I am coming home to live with you and your children the few years that are left to me."

"And maybe I will not last long, for even now I suffer with heart-disease, the hereditary curse of our family, and any day I may drop off; but I am ready whenever the Master gives me the summons."

"I shall arrive in New York about Christmas, and shall go to the St. Nicholas Hotel, the only one I remember there, and will then send you word, for I do not wish to come to your home until I know I am welcome."

"Give my love to your children, and say that uncle Gordon will be a Santa Claus for them, as he comes about Christmas time."

"I will not write more now, as I hope to see you soon."

"Ever affectionately,

"Your brother,

"GORDON KEENE."

"Thank God the old man is rich," cried Frank.

"Rich or poor, I thank God he comes back to us again; but he is overdue now, and I will go to the St. Nicholas to-morrow and look him up—nay, Frank, why could you not go down to-night, for it is early, and, if it was not so bitter cold I would go."

"By Jove, I'll do it, for I intend to get into the old man's good opinion, as he is rich."

"Bravo! this is a day of luck, sis, and I guess I won't have to go to work now—there is the door-bell again."

As Lucy was busy getting dinner Cora again went to the door.

She found there an old man, with gray hair and beard, a stoop in his gait, and a shawl about his shoulders.

He was trembling, apparently with the cold, and, said, pleadingly:

"I hope you will not turn me away, lady, but give me a chance to warm, for it is a cruel night, and your fire seemed to blaze so cheerily, as I saw it through the window, that I made bold to ring and ask shelter for a short time."

"Willingly, sir; come in, and you shall have a nice warm dinner, and remain all night, if you have nowhere else to go."

"I have no home here, lady, and I thank you, but will not remain long."

"Hullo, old man, one of your age ought to have a place to go in this kind of weather, and not be prowling about the streets," said Frank, rudely.

"This good lady said I might come in and warm, sir," answered the old man, hesitating as to whether he had not better retreat.

"You should go to the station-houses to warm, where the city provides for all tramps."

"I am no tramp, sir, but a poor old man; but I will depart as you seem not to wish me here."

"No, sir, you will take this comfortable chair; it was my poor father's, and he loved it well."

"Sit down, and let me take your shawl, and the girl will bring you some hot coffee," said Cora.

"Sis, I am ashamed of you, and, if you are going to make my home a hospital for dilapidated tramps, I will get out of it."

"Brother! do not go too far if you wish to retain my love."

"This is not your home, but mine, and what money I had saved up buys food for us, and I choose to ask this poor old gentleman to dine with us, and he will do so, for he shall not go out again into this bleak night until he is thoroughly warmed."

"Well, dine with the old tramp, if you wish; but I will not, for I go down-town to look up our rich old uncle, who must have arrived by this time," and Frank Keene drew on his heavy coat, and drawing his sealskin cap over his ears, left the little home in anger at his sister's kind act to one in distress.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A BLESSING IN DISGUISE.

THERE was something so gentle in Cora's manner, as she set to work to give her guest a good dinner and make him feel welcome, that the old man watched her with eager eyes, as she went to and fro.

She was dressed in deep black, and her pale face and red-gold hair were in beautiful contrast, while her form was willowy and the perfection of exquisite outline.

The home was neat as a New England housewife's, there was an air of comfort over all, in spite of its plainness, and the fire burned cheerily.

The table was spread with a snowy cloth, and Cora had placed a third seat for her unexpected guest, for she saw that he was no ordinary personage, even though poverty had seemingly brought him down to wandering about without a home.

When all was in readiness, Cora invited the old man to take a seat with her, and bending his head he asked:

"May I ask God's blessing, miss?"

Cora bowed assent, and the old man devoutly asked Heaven's blessing in a voice and manner that told that he was in deep earnest.

It was a pleasant meal, for the stranger guest talked well, had seen much of the world, and Cora felt toward him a friendship that she could not account for.

After the meal was over, and the two had adjourned to the sitting-room, the old man accepted a cigar which Cora offered to him, and lighting it seemed to enjoy its fragrance immensely, while he sat in thought.

At length he said:

"Young lady, I am not one who believes in practicing deception; but some time ago I read a story that made an impression upon me, simple though it was."

"Its plot was simple, and after this wise:

"A farmer lived in one of the most fertile districts of New York State, and around him was his family, consisting of his wife, two sons and two daughters."

"The eldest of the two, a son and daughter, had been sent off to fashionable boarding-schools, and the two younger were kept at home to attend the country school near by."

"The wife was a haughty woman of low origin, and, returning home for their first vacation, the two eldest children filled her head full of nonsense about how to live."

"The old carryall was not good enough for them, neither was the team of old grays, so a landau was bought, along with two spirited horses and a stylish harness."

"A farm hand was made to rig himself up in a blue suit, to drive this elegant rig, and thus the farmer's family drove to the village church on the Sabbath day."

"The second vacation came round, and the old home had to be enlarged, a bay-window set in here and there, and the parlor, dining-room and a guests' chamber refurnished."

"Back with them the sons brought a fashionable friend each to spend the vacation, and the old farm-house was completely metamorphosed."

"The old farmer was a good man; but he was very weak as regarded his children and wife, and they completely governed him, so that the few thousands he had at interest in the bank had been cut down to as many hundreds, and living expenses increasing, he had not been able to lay by as much as was his wont.

"He argued with his wife and children, but his notions were considered old-fashioned, and they said that all would be well.

"One Christmas vacation the family sat around their fire-place, all merrily talking, all excepting the farmer, who had drawn out his last money from the bank for Christmas presents.

"It was a fearful night out, and the snow was driving in clouds as it fell.

"Suddenly a step was heard upon the piazza, followed by a timid knock.

"The door was opened by the fashionable son, who expected it might be a sleighing-party of neighbors.

"But instead he saw an old tramp, ragged and wretched looking, shivering with cold.

"Get out! no tramps wanted here," he said, rudely, banging the door in his face.

"But his father sprang to his feet, and throwing open the door, said:

"Come in, old man, for this is no night to drive even a dog from one's door."

"Husband, son is right; we should not admit tramps," cried the wife.

"No, indeed, we might be murdered and robbed," said the elder daughter.

"Papa, please don't drive him away."

"Papa, please let him stay," urged the two younger children.

"He shall stay," was the firm response of the farmer, and the old man came in, trembling and seemingly hurt at the welcome he had received from the mother and her eldest children.

"In the mean time the farmer ordered the cook to prepare a warm supper, and the younger boy hunted up some of his father's old clothing, and led the tramp away to put them on, while his little sister set the table and made all comfortable for him.

"When all was ready the tramps sat down and ate a hearty supper, while the farmer's wife and her eldest children talked in loud tones, insulting him by hints and other ways all in their power.

"When his supper was finished the tramp entered the room where all sat, and said, firmly, addressing the farmer:

"Brother, it has been twenty-five years since we met, and I went away from the old farm a poor boy, leaving you everything.

"I have come back to see you, and wishing to know what kind of wife and children you had, I came here in this disguise, for then I could know them as they are.

"I am unmarried, and I am a very rich man, and these two youngest children of yours shall I leave my money to, for I have no use for those upstarts and their foolish, heartless mother."

"Had the lightning in mid-winter struck the house, all could not have been more astonished than at these words.

"In vain did the woman and her two silly children beg pardon, for he was not to be won over, and he left the house that night, for a sleigh awaited him outside, and buying a farm near by he adopted the two younger children as his heirs.

"Now, miss, that story made such an impression upon me that I have done just what that man did.

"I have come back rich, and have found out just what a worthless nephew and what a lovely niece I have.

"I heard that Frank was wild, for I made inquiries at the hotel, and I know all, and you, Cora, my sweet child, are now my daughter and my heiress, for I am your rich old uncle, Gordon Keene."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE WARNING MANACLE.

WHEN Frank Keene left his home upon the arrival of the supposed tramp, he was really glad to get an excuse for going out.

He preferred a good dinner, washed down by a bottle of wine, at Delmonico's, to dining with his sister.

He had some twenty dollars in his pocket, and accordingly, as a gambler with that amount, felt like a millionaire, for men of the Chance profession are never downhearted unless they are utterly dead-broke, and have no money whatever for a "stake."

Barney Scott was conveniently near the door as Frank Keene entered Delmonico's, and the latter hesitated and said:

"You left me in the lurch nicely, didn't you?"

"I saw that the old man was a detective, Frank, and felt that I could do you more good free than if locked up with you, so I got out of his way."

"You did, indeed, and pretty lively, too; but I don't wish a quarrel with you, Barney, so come in and have some dinner for you look hungry."

"I am," was the frank rejoinder of the young man, who was behind in his payments to his

boarding-house, and had nothing just then that he could pawn.

"I have deposited my watch for safe-keeping with a Jew, and must keep my chain and studs for appearances, you know, Frank."

"Oh, yes, you must look well, and if you did not I would not ask you in here."

The two then entered the fashionable *café*, and Frank proceeded to order according to his means, for, as he said:

"I must keep a ten as a starter for to-night, and I have only about twenty."

"Will you go to the Sportsman's Paradise?"

"No, sir."

"To Fenton's?"

"Not I."

"Where, then?"

"We'll strike a less fashionable quarter, Barney, for I have reason to believe that I am shadowed about the best places."

"Is that so?"

"It is, and I have no desire to come upon that old Jew again."

"Nor I," answered Barney, feelingly, stroking a bruised spot upon his cheek, where the fist of the old Jew had fallen heavily.

After their dinner the two worthies ordered a cab and drove to a third-rate gambling-house.

Getting out they entered the place, walked up to a faro table, and Frank Keene bought "chips" to the amount of ten dollars, with the remark to Barney Scott, in a low tone:

"If I lose this, I have just enough money to ride home on the street cars."

And lose it he did, and with a sad heart he turned away from the table, followed by Barney.

Again they stood together at the outer door of the gambling-house, when suddenly appeared the bent form of the old Jew.

Barney started on a jump to fly, but was cleverly tripped and fell.

Before he could rise he felt the Jew's foot upon him, and saw him bending over him, while he covered Frank Keene with a revolver.

"Young shentilmans, I wants you both right away, so don't make me no troubles, or I calls that bolicemans there."

Barney subsided, and Frank said angrily:

"I am not one to run, sir."

"It would do you no goods, mine fri'nt; put I wants to gif this young shentilmans to that bolicemans, as he vas guilty of collecting some monish for his employers and forgot to gif it up, you see, while you, mine fri'nt, I wants to haf a leetle talk with, and if you don't listen you vill go mit the bolicemans, too."

The old Jew gave a shrill whistle, and the policeman, standing beneath a street lamp half a square off, came quickly toward him.

"Mishter Bolicemans, vill you take dis young mans, vat I haf under my foot, down to de station-house, and I come round in t'e mornings to make charg against him?"

"You see I vas haf my padge as a detectives?"

"I see, sir; all right, sir; the young tough goes behind the bars, if you say so; but the other one?"

"I vill look me after him."

"All right, sir," and collaring Barney Scott, now terribly alarmed, the policeman led him off to the station-house.

"Now, mine fri'nt, I vas see that you vas forgets my varnings!" and the old Jew turned to Frank, who replied haughtily:

"You are not my master, sir."

"Yes I vas, mine fri'nt, for I haf t'e bapers vat you knows, and I vas told you that it would pe pad if you blays more at carts, but you vas forgets, so I gif you somedings that reminds you it vas wrong to preak your bledge, so you vill not to it again."

"If you does, you vill haf to look oud."

"Let me see your hand, please."

Had Frank Keene not desired to have the Jew take his hand, it would have been all the same, for the grip upon his arm he was powerless to throw off.

Shoving up the cuff, the old Jew bent over the wrist an instant, then a sharp snap was heard, and then, to his horror, Frank Keene found that his wrist was encircled by a broad steel band, polished brightly, a bracelet of metal he did not relish.

Holding it up to the light, to view it, he saw no break in it, and how to get it off he did not know, unless he had it filed off.

Seeing that there was something engraven he held it close to the light and read:

"Wear this as a last warning of what your fate will be if you again break your pledge."

"Dare to remove it for one year, and Heaven have mercy upon you."

"Jew, how dare you thus manacle my arm?" he cried, in a fury, and turning upon the man who had so degraded him, as he considered, to his amazement he found he had noiselessly slipped away while his back was turned so that he could read the words engraven on the steel wristlet.

Frank Keene was almost unmanned by the position in which he found himself, and stood for some moments in deep humiliation.

"I am dogged by day and night, and what does it all mean?"

"That old Jew is other than he seems, for no

man of his apparent age could possess such strength.

"Why, I am not safe anywhere, it seems, and I will have to turn over a new leaf."

"I would like to go to some place where I could get this filed off of my wrist, only I dare not do so, after the warning, for I believe I am a trifle suspicious."

"Ah! I'll change my ways, wear this galling manacle in patient submission, and it will doubtless be removed when it is known that I have reformed."

"Let me see, what was it I had to do to-night?"

"Ah, yes, I remember; it was to look up that rich old uncle and see if he has arrived."

"Scott put him wholly out of my head, so I will go at once to the St. Nicholas, for this manacle will not show under my cuff, and if it does, I'll say I am wearing it upon a wager."

"By Jove! but Barney is caged, and it is lucky I am not."

"But if he has stolen money from his firm he deserves it, for I hate a common thief."

"Now for the St. Nicholas Hotel and my old Chinese uncle."

With this he wended his steps to the hotel, asked at the office, and found that Mr. Gordon Keene had been a guest there for several days.

Frank sent up his card and anxiously awaited the return of the bell-boy.

"Mr. Keene went out, sir, after an early dinner," was the reply.

"Well, put my card in his box—stay, I will write a line on it."

Writing a line or two to say that he would call early in the morning, Frank said:

"Now for home, as I have no money to spend."

"Now, why has that old duffer not let us know that he was in town, for father's name is in the Directory, and anything sent there would have been forwarded to our present palatial hut," and the young man sneered.

"Ah, yes; the old fellow has heard of father's death, and that he left his two children penniless, and fights shy of us."

"But he must not do this, for, as he is rich, I will cultivate him in spite of himself, and be so necessary to his happiness he will have to adopt me."

Taking the avenue car that took him nearest to his home, Frank Keene surprised his sister by putting in an appearance before ten o'clock.

"Brother, we have a visitor," said Cora, meeting him at the door.

"Who is it?" he asked, in a whisper.

"Uncle Gordon."

"Indeed! I called upon him at his hotel, and was greatly disappointed to find him out."

"I am delighted to know that he has called," and Frank walked to the hat-rack to throw off his coat and hat, when he caught sight of the man he had believed a tramp seated there.

"Say, old duffer, it is time for you to go, for this is a little family reunion to-night to which tramps are not invited," he said, harshly, but in a low tone, not wishing the uncle he supposed to be in the sitting-room to hear it.

"Cora, my child, is this the youth that my brother was so unfortunate as to call his son?" and the supposed tramp towered to his full height and gazed sternly at his nephew, while Cora said reproachfully:

"Oh, Frank! that is uncle Gordon, who came in the disguise he now wears to see just what we were at home."

"And I have found out that you, my dear Cora, are one of the noblest of women, while I have a nephew whom to own as such, I fear will bring the blush of shame to his sister's cheek and mine, if he does not repent his ways very quickly."

"Oh, sir, indeed I regret having acted as I did, but the fact is, Cora's good heart leads her to do many foolish things, and in this wicked city there are many lawless deeds done by just such persons as I supposed you to be."

"I have been wild, I admit, but I have reformed, and if you will forgive me, you will not find me such a bad fellow as you think."

"Well, Frank, you are forgiven, and I will try and see if I cannot make a man of you, for you bear my name and I do not wish you to disgrace it."

And Gordon Keene grasped his nephew's hand and looked him squarely in the face.

Frank had played his part well, and chuckled over his triumph; but in his heart he cursed the man who had so cleverly made him show just what he was.

After a while Mr. Keene arose to go, and Frank offered to see him to a car, if he would not remain all night; but the old gentleman responded:

"I have a carriage waiting for me around the corner, for I would not drive up to your door, as I could not successfully play the part of a beggar."

"To-morrow, Cora, I will buy back your father's old home, and we will go there to live, and if Frank mends his ways he may be one of our home circle, but if not, he can get quarters elsewhere; good-night," and Gordon Keene went forth into the night, while a deep imprecation that shocked Cora, followed him from the lips of his unworthy nephew.

CHAPTER XXXIV.
THE DETECTIVE.

THE day after he got affairs working at the pawn-offices, Alvan Judah determined to lay the corner-stone of what it had been his intention to carry out, from the time that he had been arrested as a murderer that night in the woodland.

He had brooded over the mystery of the shot which had killed the man whom Cora Keene boldly confessed to have killed.

He had brooded over the initials which he saw upon the silk handkerchief, and could not forget the two attacks upon himself, one in the grounds of Oak Ridge Farm, the other on the highway near the mansion of Emanuel Gaspar.

He felt that this mysterious "D. D." had been in the woodland when the murder was committed, and he knew that he was the one who had tackled him.

He had promised Cora that he would solve the mystery, and prove to her that she was not the one who had fired that fatal shot.

When wandering about the streets of New York, with no work and just enough money to buy him food, he had made himself thoroughly acquainted with the lowest localities in every quarter.

He had studied the city from river to river in all its phases.

A natural-born detective, he had been enabled to discover in his wanderings certain plots for crime, and had promptly thwarted them by going to the secret service chief and reporting them.

In this way he had made the acquaintance of the chief, who, recognizing his ability, wished to engage him upon his force.

But Alvan Judah would not bind himself; he would not be trammelled in his work, for he felt that he must be wholly free for anything that might turn up, and so he did not accept the offer of Chief Boland.

But to the chief he went, as soon as his fortunes changed so suddenly and unexpectedly.

He asked for a private interview and it was granted.

Chief Boland recognized his face at a glance, but he saw that he seemed no longer the poor young man who had several times before served him well, and invariably refused his offers of money.

"Good-morning, sir; I am glad to see you looking so well. Be seated, please," said Chief John Boland, pleasantly.

"Thank you, sir, I am feeling well, for I have just come into a large fortune which I never expected to get, and I have come around to have a little talk with you upon an important matter."

"I congratulate you, Mr.—Mr.—"

"My name is Alvan Judah, sir."

"Accept my congratulations, Mr. Judah, and believe that if I can serve you in any way, I will."

"You can, sir; but I am willing either to pay well for the service, or to give heavy bonds for my good faith."

"None required, Mr. Judah; but tell me what I can do."

"To make my plan well understood, sir, I must tell you the story," and Alvan Judah told to his attentive listener the story of his life, since his return from Mexico, including the position he then held, continuing with:

"Now it is my desire to thoroughly trace this mystery to a perfect solution, Mr. Boland, and my present duties will give me ample leisure to do so; but to accomplish this purpose I must be fully armed as an officer of the law, and what I ask of you is the badge of an untrammelled detective, one who can go where he pleases, though of course I will make my reports to you."

"I can do better than that for you, Mr. Judah, for I will secure the position of United States Marshal for you, besides giving you full papers and the badge of a detective officer, and get permission for you to wear the shield of a policeman. I do this, realizing the importance of the steps you are taking in this matter, and that you may be wholly protected. The detective's badge I will give you now, and if you will call to-morrow I will have the others ready for you."

Alvan Judah warmly thanked the kind-hearted secret service chief, and departed, determined to at once enter upon the solution of the mystery surrounding him.

Armed with full power, he set to work to frighten Frank Keene into reformation, as he believed him hopelessly beyond reforming from a sense of honor.

Employing detectives to dog his steps, he was kept fully informed of the movements of the youth, and also of Barney Scott, his intimate friend, and, holding himself in readiness to act, he was enabled to be on hand in disguise, and give Frank Keene some wholesome lessons.

In regard to Barney Scott, he did not wish to prosecute him, as he knew that it would bring Frank Keene also into unpleasant notoriety, and for the sake of Cora he desisted from pressing the case, but appearing at the police court the following morning, he had him dismissed under a nominal bail, but had it impressed upon the youth most thoroughly that he would be dealt severely with if he was caught in any more

questionable transactions, seen in gambling-rooms, and found in the company of Frank Keene.

"A little more and I would have to thank them for being alive," muttered Barney Scott, as he hastened away from the court.

Then he added:

"But I've had a lesson after last night in that den, and I intend to keep out of trouble."

"There's something up, too, against Keene, and I wish I knew just what it was, so I could make him pony up, for though he is poor, somehow he gets money when he needs it, and he don't win it, that is certain, for I never saw him quit when he was in luck, but hold on until he lost all."

Having begun his war upon Frank Keene, wholly on account of Cora, Alvan Judah also laid his plans to discover the whereabouts of "D. D.," and wrote to Chicago to ascertain the full particulars of the mysterious disappearance of Doctor Austin Travers.

He knew that Cora had been engaged to the doctor, and he believed therefore that she dearly loved him, so was anxious to know fully regarding his fate, and the young Jew felt anxious to be the one who should tell her just what had befallen her lover.

With all this extra work Alvan Judah did not neglect his office duties, and attended to them fully, while every other day he managed to steal time to run up and see Emanuel Gaspar.

Upon such visits he ever received a warm welcome, not only from the old Hebrew, but from his beautiful daughter, whose heart had been stolen by the handsome young Jew whose history had been so full of adventure and romance.

For Murielle Gaspar to love any one, was to give to that one the most idolatrous worship, and to her father she made known her secret affection for Alvan Judah.

"You was a beautiful girl, mine child, and he loves you also, put he don't want to say so yet."

"It will be all right pretty quick, for he was a fine young man, and I was love him already like he was my son, as he will be when you was marry him, so don't you fret your pretty eyes out."

With this hope, expressed by her father, Murielle Gaspar lived day by day, while the man she idolized went on in the routine he planned out for himself, and also held hope in his heart of winning one fond heart for all his own.

But let the sequel show whose heart it was that the Jewish detective sought to win.

CHAPTER XXXV.

PLAYING A DEEP GAME.

BACK to their former grand home in the city moved Cora Keene and her brother, and the master of the home was their uncle Gordon.

He was given the rooms that had been the doctor's, and both his nephew and his niece did all in their power to make him most comfortable and happy.

The old gentleman seemed to fairly idolize Cora, and was never happy if she was out of his sight; but he had taken up the idea that he knew Frank perfectly, and had said to him very plainly:

"Now, nephew, I know just how weak your father was, and that you made a fool of him."

"He invested foolishly at your suggestion, although you were but a boy and half a block-head at that."

"He paid your bills until he drew his cash from the bank, bought you a ranch in Texas and stocked it, and you let it go to ruin and sold the cattle, and you were the cause of his downfall in the end, and indirectly you killed him."

"Now, Frank, I am willing to be a father to you, but not the kind of one my unfortunate brother was, or you'd have me ruin myself and blow my brains out in the end."

"I am a very rich man, far richer than your father ever was; in fact, I am worth quadruple what he was, and I made it all myself."

"I tell you this that you may understand just what you have to expect from me."

"I have bought back this place at a bargain, for I paid cash for it."

"I bought back Oak Ridge, Frank, also at a low figure, because I paid cash for it."

"They are both in your sister's name, and my will, which I made anew yesterday, leaves her all my property."

"But there is an appendix, or clause, which leaves a handsome fortune to you if you live up to certain principles; but if you do not obey as you should, that clause is not worth the paper it is written on."

"Now I am not harsh, Frank, for you are to have an income from me of just two hundred dollars per month."

"You got a situation several days ago with Calhoun, Clinton & Co. that pays you eighteen hundred a year."

"Now this gives you three hundred and fifty a month."

"You live here, so pay no board and lodging; I have ordered a good horse and buggy for you, and as he is stabled here, it will cost you nothing to keep him."

"So you have your income and salary to spend as you please, and I will stand no nonsense."

"Gamble one dollar away, enter this house drunk, live above your three hundred and fifty per month, associate with questionable people, and you never darken again the door of your sister's house, for you shall not disgrace her, nor my name."

"Now you have heard your Chinese uncle, as you call me, give you a setting down, and you know just what to expect, so you can choose your own course."

"Uncle, I thank you for the plain talk you have given me, and I shall prove myself worthy of your esteem, and more than make up for the heartaches which I have occasioned poor sis."

So said Frank Keene, and rising betimes and going to his work, and spending most of his evenings at home, it certainly looked as though he had indeed reformed.

But under this life Frank grew pale and thin, and one day hinted that he would like to go West.

His uncle suggested a trip to California, on some business interests of his, and Frank seized upon the idea with delight.

But, before he went, he determined to have a talk with his sister, and hence sought her in her own room one night.

"Sis, I have got to go West, on this business for uncle Gordon, and will be away a month at least."

"Yes, Frank."

"Now I think I have lived devilish square of late, sis."

"You have indeed."

"No fault to find with me?"

"None whatever, Frank, and you deserve credit."

"Thank you; but I have come to tell you a great secret."

"Well, brother?"

"I am in trouble."

"Oh, brother!"

"Don't get frightened, for I haven't touched a card or been drunk since I reformed."

"Then what is your trouble, Frank?"

"It is an old story."

"How mean you, Frank?"

"You see, some time ago, over a year now, I was led into executing some paper which now comes up against me."

"Well, Frank?"

"I should not have done it, but I did, and the result is the paper is held against me now."

"How much is the note for?"

"It is not a note."

"What then?"

"I was drunk, did not know what I was doing, and wrote some names on some financial papers, and they are held against me now as forgeries, and the men who hold them say they will arrest me and push the affair if I do not pay them."

"Oh, Frank!"

"Don't blame me, sis, for that was done before I reformed, and most bitterly do I feel it now."

"But I have only about six hundred saved up, and I can do nothing toward paying the sum."

"How much is it, Frank?"

"Twelve thousand dollars."

"Oh, Frank!"

"The paper calls for but eight thousand, but he has me in his power and thus makes me pay, and he will spring it upon me if I start to California without buying the documents from him."

"Frank, I have heard of this before, it matters not how, and I will get the papers for you."

"You, sis?"

"Yes."

"But how?"

"Never mind, I will get them, so come here to-morrow night, and I will show them to you."

Frank was astounded, and departed from the room, going directly to a house on a cross street not far away.

He ascended the stairs, when the door was opened, and knocked at a room upon the second floor.

Entering at an invitation, he found there Barney Scott, living quite comfortably, though he only pretended to work.

"Well, Barney, I struck sis for the amount, and told her a story about having to buy up some forged papers a fellow held against me, and she coolly told me she would get them and have them for me to-morrow night."

"What she means I do not know, but I shall have to wait and see."

"Frank, are there not honestly such papers out against you?"

"Yes, Barney."

"And can your sister get them?"

"If she knows who holds them."

"Does she?"

"I do not know."

"Do you?"

"I think it is that infernal old Jew."

"Well, if she gets them?"

"I do not know what to do, for if I do not pay our losses in a few days, that gambler swears he will go directly to my uncle and tell

him I played tricks on him and got money under false pretenses."

"You are in a bad way, Frank."

"And so are you, for you live by my charity," was the angry retort.

Barney Scott smiled, and answered:

"Yes, we are both in a bad way; but I can help you out."

"How?"

"If your sister shows you papers, tell her they are not the originals, but copies, and that whoever gave them to her played a cheap game upon her."

"Tell her you can send the man to her with the originals, and send me, with some which we can get up."

"I will be there, and leave with you, for once you get twelve thousand dollars in your hands, you would skip out for parts unknown."

"You wrong me, Frank; but do as you please."

"Then I will do as you say, and have Cora pay you the money."

"I will leave you with her, skip out, and await you around the corner; but I shall have a detective at the other corner to be sure you don't get away, for I do not trust you."

"Serve me, get the money, and I will pay my debts, for yours you do not care about, and I will give you three thousand to clear out on."

"It is a bargain, Frank."

"Well, get the papers ready for the plot, and have all ready for day after to-morrow, and then all will go well."

"But can your sister get the twelve thousand?"

"Yes, for she has plenty of money that old fool gives her, and jewelry enough to pawn and make up the balance."

"Will she pawn her jewelry, though?"

"She will," and with this the arch-plotter against a loving sister left his confederate in crime, and returned home to read aloud to his uncle and sister and play the part of hypocrite toward both.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE REFUSAL.

THE next evening, according to appointment, Frank anxiously sought his sister's room.

He could not understand how she would come into possession of the very papers, on the existence of which he had tried to rob her of money, under a pretense to buy them up, when he did not himself know their whereabouts, unless the old Jew had them to hold against him.

It will be remembered that Alvan Judah had sent these very papers to Cora, and that he had found them, tied in a handkerchief, in the grounds of Oak Ridge Farm, after the attack upon him there of the man he had then captured.

It will also be recalled to the reader that Cora took from the breast-pocket of the man, whom she had believed that she killed, a bundle of papers, which he had told her compromised her brother, and which he demanded money to deliver up.

But the papers which she had taken proved not to be the ones she desired, greatly to her regret.

She found them to be letters and a few papers that would have fully made known the identity of the slain man, had they fallen into the hands of the officers of the law.

She, however, secured the package which the man, Macy Belden, had held up to her vision, claiming to be the one which he threatened to hold against Frank Keene.

When, therefore, she received from Alvan Judah the telltale papers of her brother's fraud, she knew, or thought that she did, that she held the proofs of his guilt in her hands, and no longer worried about them.

She had not destroyed them, however, and, when Frank came to her room, she showed them to him.

His face brightened, as he recognized the evidences of his guilt, and held them in his own hands.

But this was not his little game, and he said in a chagrined tone:

"You have been deceived, sis."

"How so, brother?"

"Why, the man who sold you these— By the way, what did you pay for them?"

"The price asked was a large one, Frank," said Cora, referring to the sum which the man had demanded for the papers when a prisoner at Oak Ridge Cottage, though she disliked, even in such a case, to play a deceptive part.

"Well, he has played sharp upon you, that is all."

"How do you mean?"

"These are not the originals."

"What?"

"The originals are held by a man who threatens to arrest me and have all come out."

"He took them up to hold power over me, that he might regularly demand hush-money."

"These are simply copies, and some one has sold them to you, while the real proofs of my acts are in dangerous hands."

"Oh, Frank!" cried Cora, in deep distress.

"Well, sis, I am in for it."

"No, no, you shall not go to prison if I can save you, brother."

"But how can you?"

"I have those diamonds I once pawned, and others, which uncle Gordon has given me."

"Then I have some fifteen hundred dollars, which I intended to fit myself up for spring and summer with, but I will not mind that."

"You are too good, sis."

"Frank, you will repay all I do for you, I know, for you are not the same boy at all now that you were three months ago."

"Well, sis, I will send the man to you with the papers; but when?"

"To-morrow night, for I must arrange to get the money, and uncle goes out to dinner, you know."

"Yes; well, I will tell him, and see if I can not get him down a peg or two in his demand."

"I wish you could, Frank."

"Would not uncle let you have the money, sis?"

"I would not dare ask him, for he would at once suspect it was for you, and he says now that I am foolish ever to have protected you in your wild acts."

"Oh, he's an old fossil, and I don't believe ever was a young man," and Frank went out for the evening, while Cora paced her room, trying to count up just what sum she could raise.

She had tried in vain to find Alvan, the Jew, for she felt keenly the pecuniary obligation she was under to him, and the amount due him she had safely laid away, ready to pay over at a moment's notice, should she discover him.

She felt assured that he had kept an eye upon Frank, and had done what he could to reform him, and she was grateful to him, and the more anxious to find him; but this, so far, had been impossible.

Going down into the library, she read to her uncle for awhile, and, just as he retired, Frank came in and threw himself upon the lounge.

Cora went on reading to herself for awhile, and at last tiring of it, arose to retire.

Frank had dropped to sleep, one arm across his eyes to shade them from the light overhead.

As Cora glanced at him she started, for upon his wrist her eyes fell upon something that looked strangely like a handcuff.

Stooping over she read the engraving thereon, and then, as her brother started to his feet, she cried:

"Oh, Frank! what does that mean?"

"What does what mean?"

"That manacle upon your wrist."

Frank turned deadly pale, but instantly checking his emotion, he said:

"Sis, that is a good joke on me, for I was in the detectives' office to-night to see if I could not put an officer after that fellow who holds those papers, and frighten him a little."

"While there, I picked up this manacle, and my curiosity led me to put it on."

"It snapped shut, and I will have to wait until to-morrow to have it taken off, for the chief only has the secret of opening it."

This explanation seemed satisfactory to Cora, and after examining the manacle carefully and remarking upon the peculiar words engraved upon it, she bade her brother good-night and retired.

The next morning after breakfast she counted over just what money she had, and, not including what she had laid aside as due her unknown friend, who she was sure was Alvan Judah, she had about seventeen hundred dollars.

This left her a large sum to raise with her jewels, and counting them over, with an approximate value, she concluded she might get the sum needed, with the six hundred which Frank said he had.

Putting on a plain dress and belt, and carrying with her a thick veil, she left the house, and walking to Madison Square called a hack.

Giving the number of Emanuel, the pawnbroker, she bade the hackman drive thither, and on the way completely concealed her face beneath the thick veil she had with her.

Entering the shop, Cora went into the little private box, partitioned off, and failed to see a man hastily pass into the inner room.

It was Alvan Judah, and calling the clerk to him hastily, he said:

"Detain that lady in the box as long as you can, and then come to me for orders."

"Yesh, sir," said Simon, and as he departed from the room Alvan Judah rung for a messenger-boy.

One soon came, and a note was hastily written and sent by him to detective head-quarters.

In the mean time Simon kept dickering with an old Irishwoman about a shawl, and then with a negro about the loan wanted on a silver watch.

After disposing of these two, he appeared to suddenly notice the presence of Cora, and said politely:

"Vell, lady, I vas not see you pefore."

"I had time to wait, sir, and I have come for another loan, and a large one, as you were generous to me before."

"Vell, I vill do mine best, lady."

"Vat vas it that you vish?"

"Here are the same diamonds that you had before."

"I vas recognize them."

"Now I wish to ask you if you have found out anything for me regarding the gentleman who took them out of pawn for me, for you remember I called in and asked you to do so, promising to pay you well for your services."

"I remembers, lady; put I vas no able to find oud for you."

"I am very sorry, for I owe him debts I am most anxious to pay, as this one was by no means his only kindness to me."

"Now, I wish to leave these same diamonds with you, and also these others."

"You vas haf some fine t'ings dere, mish."

"They are handsome, I know, and I wish to pawn them, perhaps for a long time; but I will pay the interest regularly upon them."

Simon glanced over the collection, and his well-trained eye told him within a few dollars of their worth.

"How much vas you vants, mish?" he asked, indifferently.

"Ten thousand dollars."

Simon gave a low whistle.

"Are they not worth it?" asked Cora, falteringly.

"They vas doubtless cost so much, ven dey vas boughted; put I vill see, I vill see."

He took the jewels into the rear office and laid them on the desk before Alvan Judah, who had overheard all that had been said.

"The governors vill look dem over, mish," said Simon, returning to the shop to look after other customers.

Cora waited patiently, while Alvan Judah rung for another messenger and dispatched him to the detective head-quarters with a note.

Then he touched the bell upon his desk and Simon appeared.

"Say to the lady that you are sorry, but cannot lend money on these things, as they resemble certain jewelry that was stolen, and you have to be cautious."

Simon departed with the jewelry, and delivered them to Cora with Alvan Judah's message.

He saw her start, but did not penetrate the veil's thickness so as to see her grow very white.

"I am sorry, sir, for it was very urgent."

"I shall have to go elsewhere," she said, sadly.

As she turned to go the little bell tinkled in the inner office.

"Say to the lady that she had better not take those jewels elsewhere, as they might get her into trouble," said Alvan Judah.

The message was delivered just as Cora was leaving the shop.

She made no reply, and walked out to her carriage.

Entering it, she bade the driver go to another pawnbroker's.

"I must try it," she muttered.

At another pawnbroker's she showed her jewels and asked for a loan.

"I vas told by messenger from bolice quarters that I vas to take in no such t'ings," said the man behind the counter.

"There must be some mistake, for these jewels are not stolen," said Cora.

"I von't take 'em in," was the response.

"Drive to Brooklyn," was her order to the coachman, and thither she went.

A pawnbroker there also refused to give a loan on the gems, and, utterly disheartened, Cora ordered the driver to return to his stand where she had hired him.

She dared not take them elsewhere, and, in dismay at the consequences, she returned home.

As she ascended the steps of her elegant home, she suddenly discovered Simon.

Had he followed her, she wondered, and come to tell her he would lend her the money she had asked?

Turning toward him, she said, quickly:

"Well, sir?"

"Mish, I vas come to tell you somedings, if you vas villing to pay me for vat I knows."

"Come into the house," said Cora, and opening the door with her pass-key, she led the young Jew into the parlors.

"Well, sir?"

"You vas want to know t'e shentilmans that gif you pack t'e diamonds?"

"Yes."

"I vas aple to tells you his name, and vere he lifs."

"I pray you do so."

"Vat vas it vort to you, mish?"

"What do you demand?"

"Fifty tollars."

"Here it is," and Cora handed that sum out of her pocket-book, adding:

"Now tell me."

"His name vas Alvan Judah, and he vas a Hebrew shentilmans."

"And where does he live?"

"He has rooms at t'e Astor House."

"Ah, yes, I thank you; but can you not arrange in some way to give me the loan I asked for?"

"No, I vould not touch them 'ewels for mooch monish."

"Good-tay, mish," and Simon, delighted at having made fifty dollars, was backing out, when he continued:

"You vas not say how you find oud Mr. Judah, mish?"

"No, I will not betray you, sir."

"I thank you, mish," and Simon departed, wondering at Alvan Judah's deep interest in this Christian girl, and why one who dwelt in a palace, as it were, should have to pawn her diamonds.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A WHEEL WITHIN A WHEEL.

It was too late, upon Cora's return home, for her to enter upon any other scheme by which to raise the money, which she believed necessary to save her brother from ruin.

Her uncle was going for a drive in the Park, and sent up for her to accompany him, and hastily robing herself she went down and joined him.

"Take a rapid run through the Park, William, as I must get back and dress for a dinner-party," said Mr. Keene to the coachman.

As the carriage was threading its way among the many vehicles that crowded the grand drive, and was on its way back, Cora's eyes suddenly fell upon a superb pair of elegant horses, drawing a very handsome open carriage.

A coachman and footman in livery were upon the box, and upon the back seat were two persons.

The one was an exquisitely beautiful girl, with black hair and eyes, dressed in rich furs, and the other was none other than Alvan Judah.

Cora's face flushed and paled.

His face also crimsoned, and he raised his hat as she bent low, a bright smile or greeting upon his handsome face.

"Who was that beautiful girl?" asked Murielle, a pang of jealousy in her heart.

"One I met up in the country last summer," answered Alvan Judah, who had been called for by Murielle, to take him home to dine with her father.

"Is she a Jewess?" came the question.

"No, she is a Christian maiden, Murielle."

"Ah," and the pang left Murielle's heart.

And in the Keene carriage?

"My child," asked uncle Gordon, "who were those people?"

"The gentleman I met last summer, uncle; he was the same of whom I have told you, as being arrested and tried for my act."

"Indeed! his name was Judah, you said?"

"Yes, sir."

"He cannot be poor to drive in such style."

"No, sir, his fortunes have without doubt changed."

"Married rich, I suppose, for he has the face to win a girl."

"Was that his wife with him?"

"No, sir," said Cora, and yet she did not know who it was.

"A beautiful girl, and doubtless his fiancée, as she is driving with him."

"But that young man has been most kind to you, Cora, and I know you have wished to find him and thank him, and also repay him, for he paid the expenses of your father's funeral, you said, and sent you a check."

"I know that he did, uncle, and I shall thank him, for I have heard that he boards at the Astor House."

"Well, call on me for the money, child; but what do you think of Frank's reformation?"

"I think that he has wholly reformed, uncle."

"I hope so, but I fear the boy."

"Anyhow, this trip of his to the West will put him on trial."

"If he does well, comes back sober and out of debt, I will do well by him."

"If not he will have to plod along on a salary and the income I allow him; but here we are at home, and I must dress for dinner, as the President will be there, and I have been out of the country so long I wish to meet a President of the United States."

Cora went to her room and sat down to think. After awhile she went to her desk and wrote the following note:

"HOME, Friday.

"MY DEAR MR. JUDAH:—Having learned of your address in the city, after long months of search for you, I write to thank you with my whole heart for all that you have done for me and mine."

"Circumstances I cannot explain caused me to set free that prisoner you left in my charge at Oak Ridge Farm."

"Again I recognized you one night when you brought my erring brother home, and I know much of your kind efforts in his behalf."

"For myself, I have to thank you for so kindly paying the undertaker's bill, of my poor father's funeral expenses, for I traced the noble deed to you, as I did also the draft you sent me for five hundred dollars."

"Still more I have to thank you for the return of the diamonds, which I was forced to pawn, and in all I am indebted to you seventeen hundred dollars, which I inclose to you, for, as my father's brother has now adopted me as his daughter, I am no longer in need."

"I have told my uncle of your kindness, but I have not betrayed the secret you asked me to keep, when at Oak Ridge Farm, nor shall I, and it has been a great blessing to me to feel that I am not the one who took the life of that man."

"As my uncle would like to join his thanks with mine for all your kindness, will you not, at an early day, call upon us, for I inclose my card with address?"

"With esteem and friendship,

"CORA KEENE."

This letter was dispatched by a special messenger to the Astor House, with orders to give it to the clerk to lock up in the safe for Mr. Judah, should he be absent.

Having canceled this debt, Cora went down to dinner.

Her uncle was absent, but Frank had come home.

He seemed a trifle nervous, and drank a little more wine than had been his wont of late.

Cora, as soon as dinner was over, told him of her non-success, and he became greatly excited.

Just at that moment a servant brought in a card and handed it to Cora.

"Mr. Barnes," she said, musingly; "I do not know him."

"It is my man, sister; but what can we do?" cried Frank.

"I will see him."

And Cora swept into the parlor, to find there a stout man, with a full-bearded face and restless eyes.

He bowed in an awkward way at Cora's entrance, and with a slight bend of the head in acknowledgment, the maiden said:

"You are Mr. Barnes?"

"Yes, miss."

"You have come to trade some paper you hold, which is of a detrimental character?"

"Yes, miss."

"How came you by this paper?"

"Your brother signed the names, and would have been found out; but I took up the paper and paid my money for it."

"And you are out the sum you paid?"

"Yes, miss; and the interest."

"How much in all do you want?"

"Twelve thousand dollars."

"It is a large sum, sir."

"What I paid out, the interest for nearly two years, and the bonus I should have, miss, for keeping quiet and risking my money, make up in all just twelve thousand, no more, no less."

"I cannot give you the money to night."

"Must have it, miss, for I hain't been treated just right by your brother."

"Give me two weeks to pay you."

"No, miss."

"I cannot pay you sooner."

"Give me security."

"Ah!"

And Cora remembered her diamonds.

"Wait," she said.

And leaving the room, she hastened up-stairs. As she did so Frank glided in.

"Barney, you have made yourself look a hundred pounds heavier, and your disguise is perfect, while you play your part well; but we cannot get the money, as you know, though the diamonds are worth nearly as much. I'll come out and join you soon; but don't try any game, for I've got two detectives outside watching you—'Sh!'"

And Frank ran out of the room.

A moment after Cora entered, and handed to the pretended Mr. Barnes the jewels.

He examined them critically and said:

"They are not worth the sum, miss; but you show your good intentions, and I'll take them as security. Good-night, miss; two weeks from to-night I'll be here."

And Barney Scott departed.

As he descended the stone steps, two men came up and joined him, one of them remarking:

"My man, we are officers, and we are to keep you under eye until we get further orders."

Barney swore inwardly but made no reply, walking quietly along.

Soon after a quick step was heard behind them and Frank appeared.

"All right, my men; I'll look after him now; here is your pay."

He handed them some money, and then he and Barney walked off together.

As they did so a man suddenly came up and joined the detectives.

It was Alvan Judah, and he said, addressing the officers:

"Follow those men and find out where they go, and full particulars; then report to me at my hotel."

The detectives started off on their mission, while Alvan Judah walked quietly away, a strange expression visible upon his fine face as he passed under the street lamp.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

WHAT WAS SEEN BY A NIGHT-WATCHER.

CORA did not feel much relief from her distress, after having given up her jewels, for she knew that a day of payment must come, and how she would be able to then pay the large sum she could not tell.

She looked over the bogus papers, and an expression came upon her face that said plainly:

"I will not give them up, now I have them."

"No, I will destroy them."

She tossed the package into the fire as she spoke, and then began to walk to and fro.

Presently her maid came in, and passed into the little dressing-room adjoining; but Cora did not appear to notice her, and while walking to and fro began to muse aloud.

"I could even commit a great sin," she mused, "to hide my brother's shame."

"Oh! how fearful it would be for him to have to go to prison."

"But he shall not."

"Uncle Gordon I know would refuse to give me the money, if I asked it, for he would at once feel that it was for Frank, and I know that he does not like him."

"If I could only get it from him in some way, for I must get my diamonds back, or the secret will come out, and the public know all, for that horrid man will not spare my brother."

"Ah me! just to think that uncle Gordon has made a will in my favor, and leaves me his immense fortune, and yet, while he lives, I cannot get a few thousands to save my brother from prison."

"He has added a codicil to the will about Frank, but has not signed it, so if he died suddenly, brother could get nothing from him."

"But Frank should never suffer where I have money, and I wish I could help him now."

"Yes, and I will, in some way or other, for I must, or disgrace comes upon us and Frank goes to prison, and that is too horrible to think of."

To calm her excitement Cora went downstairs and sat down to play upon the piano, when suddenly the door-bell was rung violently.

Fearing some harm had befallen Frank, Cora ran to the door herself and threw it open.

There were several men coming up the steps with a burden between them, and a carriage stood at the curb.

"Oh, tell me who it is!" cried Cora, dreading the worst.

"It is your uncle, Miss Keene; he is ill, having been seized with a slight stroke of apoplexy at the dinner-table," said one of the gentlemen.

Cora called up the servants, had her uncle's rooms put at once in readiness, sent for the nearest physician, and also for their family physician, and acted with a coolness that won the admiration of those who had borne Mr. Keene home.

"It is not so bad, my child," said Gordon Keene, after the physician had pronounced upon his case.

"I will soon nurse you back to health, uncle," said Cora, and from that moment she devoted herself to him.

As Cora did not like her maid, not finding her competent as such, and she had been a nurse in a hospital, the woman was engaged to look after the invalid, for he was very peevish, and would not allow Frank and the house-servants to come near him.

This caused Cora to be almost constantly with him, and it began to tell upon her, for her face became pale and her eyes drooped heavily.

One night she sat up until very late, and then giving her uncle his medicine, went up to her room to steal a few hours' sleep, first telling the nurse to watch by him, and to call her if she was needed.

The sun was just rising when she was awakened with a start by the nurse entering her room.

"Miss, your uncle is dead, and the medicine you gave him last I know was not what he should have."

"What do you mean?" gasped Cora, springing from her bed and confronting the nurse.

"I mean just what I say, miss; that you gave your uncle poison last night, for I saw you do it, that you might get his money now."

Cora could not speak, but swayed to and fro, while her face became livid.

Then, with a shriek, she fell in a swoon upon the floor.

When she recovered consciousness she found that there were several persons in her room.

Instantly she asked what it all meant, and the physician in attendance told her abruptly:

"You are accused of the murder of your uncle."

"Oh, God!" groaned Cora, and she covered her face with her hands for an instant and then asked:

"Where is my brother?"

"He is in his room under surveillance."

"Why is he guarded?"

"It is thought best that he should be."

"And these men, who are they?"

"Officers of the law."

Cora shuddered, and relapsed into silence, after the words broke from her lips:

"Heaven have mercy upon me, for I am utterly lost."

Several hours passed away, and it was reported that a *post mortem* examination of Gordon Keene's body showed large quantities of poison in the stomach.

The nurse had said that she saw Cora come into the room about three o'clock, bearing in her hand a bottle, which was different from the one the invalid's medicine was in.

She had walked toward the bed, evidently not seeing her, as she lay back in the shadow in an easy-chair, and bending over the invalid had awakened him and given him two teaspoonfuls of the medicine from the bottle she had brought with her.

The invalid had coughed severely and asked for more water, and Cora set the bottle down to get it for him, after which he dropped instantly to sleep, and Cora glided quickly from the room, seemingly forgetting to take the bottle she had brought with her.

Upon examination it was found that the bottle left there was one from a medicine-case which Doctor Keene had had, and which was stowed away in a lumber-room.

It bore the mark of "Deadly Poison," and was the same drug that Doctor Keene had committed suicide with.

Such was the story told by the woman who held the place of nurse, and had seen all that had occurred.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

AGAIN IN THE TOILS.

THERE was mourning and despair in the grand home of the Keenes, for not only had death fallen there with its fearful stroke, but it was said that a murder had been committed, that Gordon Keene had been poisoned by his niece, who was to be his heiress.

It was hard to believe, and yet the evidence and causes seemed to be so conclusive that the maiden was led away to prison, and the beautiful belle became the inmate of a cell in the city jail.

Society was crushed by the blow, and men and women in fashionable life stood aghast, while a shudder seemed to pervade every heart in high and low life.

It was several days after the stroke of illness which had prostrated Mr. Keene that Alvan Judah sat in his back office at the shop, looking over his letters.

People were going in and coming out of the shop seeking loans, and Simon and his associate clerk were kept busy.

Suddenly a young man sprung out of a cab that drew up at the door and dashed into the shop, instantly darting into the private box where Cora had been a few days before.

He was a dashing-looking youth, and seeing in him a valuable customer, Simon neglected an old negress to look after him.

"Vell, sir, v'at is it?" said Simon.

"I want some money."

"I thoughted so."

"I wish all you can let me have."

"That vas a goot deal, for we vas have blenty of monish."

"Yes; you Jews are all rich."

"I vas vera poor, mine fri'nt; but v'at haf you to porrow monish on?"

"There."

And the young man displayed a number of jewels.

"Ah!" said Simon.

"They are very valuable."

"Yes; how much you wants?"

"Twelve thousand dollars; not a penny less."

"I vas see."

And Simon took the jewels and entered the office, placing them before Alvan Judah.

"Ha! who brought these?"

"A young gentlemans vas vish to get twelve thousand tollars on them, sir."

"Describe him."

"He vas a pretty young mans, vith hair like golt, and—"

"Tell him he will have to wait until you send to the bank for the money."

Simon disappeared, and springing hastily to his feet Alvan Judah entered an adjoining room where he took from a shelf a bundle.

In a short while he came out again, but so metamorphosed no one would have recognized him, for he had changed into the old Jew who had on two occasions met Frank Keene.

The bell tinkled and Simon came at its call, but showed no surprise at seeing his employer's fit-out.

"Ask the gentleman to come in here and get his money."

Simon did so, and as the young man entered the door, Alvan Judah arose and greeted him with:

"Vell, mine yoong fri'nt, ve vas meet again, don't ve?"

An exclamation of surprise broke from the lips of the young man, and he turned as though to fly, but the Jew called out:

"That vas a spring lock on the door, mine fri'nt, and you don't vas get out if you vant, so sit right away down and ve haf a leetle talks to-gedder."

Frank Keene, for as the reader has doubtless surmised, he it was, sunk down into the chair pointed out to him, and fairly trembled.

"You vas haf my bracelet, mine fri'nt?"

Silently he held up his arm, bared his wrist, and showed the steel band.

"And with that on you vas steal your sister's diamonds?"

"They are not my sister's and I did not steal them," gasped the culprit.

"Yoong mans, do you think I vas a fool?"

"Those diamonds vas your sister's, and you vas gone wrong again and owe more gambling money."

"Don't you vas deny it, for I vas know all apoud you, as you shall see."

"You vas blay a leetle choke on your goot sister, py tell her that you vas do wrong mit some bapers, and have to haf some monish or goes to brison."

"Vell, you got your fri'nt, Parney Scott vas his names, to help you, and he dresses himself

up like a fat mans and wear sum peards, and he gif bapers to your sister which both of you haf wrote, and she gif to him these jewels to holt for security for two weeks, and you haf come to pawn 'em."

"You vas see I knows eberydings, don't I vas?"

Frank Keene groaned, for he had not the power of speech.

Then the one whom he supposed to be an old Jew continued:

"I vas haf my eyes on you, as I vas warn you."

"I vas see you join your fri'nt, and you had two tedeectives to vatch your fri'nt."

"Vell, the tedeectives vas mine mans, and they vas follow you and find oud all dings."

"Then I vas see your fri'nt, and he vas very scared and tells me all about it, and for tell the truth I vas gif him some monish, and he vas go Vest pretty quick; but if I vas vant him for vitness he vas come back pretty quick too."

"You see I vas a tedeective myself," and opening his coat he showed several gold badges, on one of which Frank saw "Special of Secret Service," on another "U. S. Marshal," and upon the third, "Special City Police."

How the supposed old Jew managed to hold these three valuable badges, Frank Keene did not care to inquire; but he seemed to tremble at the power he possessed, and said pitifully:

"Oh, sir; spare me!"

"Vell, I don't vant to be cruel, mine fri'nt, so I vas dry you vonce more."

"Thank you; oh, thank you."

"V'y did you vant to get this monish?"

"To pay a gambling debt."

"Who vas you owe?"

"A man by the name of Jackson, on Houston street."

"How mooch?"

"Two thousand."

"V'y you wants twelve t'ousands?"

"Because I wished to give Barney some money to go away West with, and get rid of him, as I vas afraid of him."

"V'at else?"

"I wanted a few thousand to take on a trip to California, above what my uncle vas to give me, that I might have a good time."

"I vas see; put you vas don't haf no goot time as you vas think, mine fri'nt, for you vas not to go Vest, as it vas a pad place for you."

"You vas stay here, wear that pracelet of mine I gif you, keep up your york, and I vill see if you turn oud this time all rights."

"Now you vas go, right away quick."

"But those diamonds?"

"Mine fri'nt, they vas safer mit me, so I keeps them a leetle time."

"But you have no right to them."

"Mine fri'nt, I see you vas not satisfied, so I vill shust take you over mit t'e brison."

"For God's sake, no! I am content!" cried Frank, in alarm.

And he hastened out of the office, while Alvan Judah took up a sheet of paper and wrote a few lines.

"Simon, take this to Mr. Jackson, a gambler on Houston street."

Simon departed, and Alvan Judah again took up his pen and wrote as follows:

"ASTOR HOUSE."

"Will Miss Keene pardon me for again intruding upon her with a letter, when I do so to forward to her the diamonds which she was so unfortunate as to place in the hands of a villain?"

"The papers, of so serious a nature, which I forwarded to her were the originals, and those which she received from one Barnes were but copies."

"It was a plot to deceive her and rob her, for the jewels were taken to a pawnbroker to-day, but, being on the watch, I secured them, and with the cost of just two thousand dollars."

"The man Barnes has gone West, and it is for the welfare of Mr. Frank Keene that it is so."

"May I ask that Miss Keene keep a watch upon her brother, as the reformation is not yet complete, and to advise that her uncle does not yet send him West, for it is best to give him a trial yet awhile."

"The charge of two thousand dollars on the diamonds is made, as that was the exact sum paid out, and because I am well aware that Miss Keene would accept no pecuniary favor at my hands, and is able to pay the sum; but let her take her own time in liquidating the indebtedness to the writer of these lines."

"In conclusion, let me thank Miss Keene for the draft sent, which was the correct amount, and as disguise is further useless, admit that I sought to give her some return in my power for her noble act toward one who was then a most unfortunate individual."

"As it will be in my power to still serve Miss Keene, I shall continue to do so, and as she has so kindly asked me to call, I shall give myself that pleasure at an early day. With esteem,"

"ALVAN JUDAH."

When Simon returned Alvan Judah told him to carry the letter he had just written, along with the diamonds, which he had neatly folded up, to the residence of Miss Keene early the following morning and to deliver them to her in person.

A moment after the gambler Jackson came in.

He was a hard-featured man, rough and uncouth.

"You sent for me to come and see you, Jew?" he said, rudely.

"Yes, mine fri'nt," answered Alvan Judah, still carrying out his disguise.

"My yoong fri'nt, Mr. Keene vas gif me some securities for some monish, and vish me to pay you: how mooch vas it?"

"Two thousand dollars."

"Haf you his due-bill, mine fri'nt?"

"Yes; here it is."

"Vell, dere ish your monish, and now let me tells you von t'ings, mine fri'nt, if you vas let that gentlemans blay boker in your blace vonce more, I vill haf you up for von swindler mans."

"What have you got to do with it, Jew?"

"I vas haf to do vith it just v'at I say, and don't you forgit your memories apoud it."

And the Jew threw open his coat and exhibited his badges.

"Fury! you have got authority! I cave, Jew!"

"You vas as vise a man as Solomon."

"Now you vas go, put don't you forgets."

The gambler left the office, and Alvan Judah took off his disguise, and as that was one of his nights to visit Emanuel Gaspar and Murielle, he went up to the stable where he kept his team of spanking bays and drove out to the place where he ever received the warmest welcome.

CHAPTER XL.

THE PROOFS.

WHEN Alvan Judah drove into town the next morning from the residence of Emanuel Gaspar, his face was stern and sad.

The old Hebrew had hinted to him that he would be glad to see him marry Murielle, and then had told him plainly that his daughter loved him with all her heart.

The young Jew seemed pained to hear this, and then said:

"Mr. Gaspar, no more beautiful maiden than Murielle did I ever see, or one that has a truer, nobler character."

"Had I met her before the misfortunes that fell upon me, I would haved loved her most devotedly."

"But I must confess to you, sir, that I love another, and that other is one who saved my life."

"She is not of our people, or of our creed, for she is a Christian; but this does not prevent my loving her, though it raises a barrier to my telling her of my love and asking her to marry me."

"Tell Murielle just what I have told you, sir, and say to her that to me she is as a darling sister."

With the memory of this confession in his mind, Alvan Judah felt strangely sad as he drove in to the office.

Arriving there he was met by Simon, who seemed greatly excited.

"I took the letter and package, sir, put the bolcemens took 'em from me, as t'e lady vas a brisoner for killing her uncles."

Such were the first tidings of the murder of Gordon Keene that reached the ears of Alvan Judah.

He seemed hardly to have the power of motion, after he sunk into a seat, and Simon ran on with the horrible story as it had reached his ears, and adding a few variations of his own as he saw how deeply it moved his employer to listen to him.

Springing to his feet, with an energy that sent Simon flying into the shop, Alvan Judah cried in his deep voice that made his clerks tremble:

"It is false! false as perdition! She never committed deed so foul!"

But, with all his confidence in the innocence of Cora Keene, Alvan Judah was forced to hear the most damning evidence against her when brought to trial.

He had passed weeks in trying to solve the mystery.

He had spent his gold freely in hiring detectives.

He had busied himself day and night striving to find some clew that would point to the guilt of the brother, that the sister might be saved.

He visited the fair prisoner in her cell, and tried to force from her lips that she was guiltless, but not one word for or against herself would Cora Keene utter.

Then Alvan Judah engaged the very best legal talent, and said:

"Save her and then name your price."

The day of trial came, and Cora Keene, white-faced, haughty and silent, faced her accusers.

It was a thrilling scene, there in that courtroom, and a silence like unto death rested upon all.

Frank Keene was there, but not as a prisoner. No evidence against him could be found, to prove that he was even an accessory to the murder, though he stood in a most unenviable situation, as it was said, that for his sake his sister had committed this fearful crime.

The young man looked haggard, was very pale, and seemed most nervous.

He did not look at his sister, but kept his eyes down as he sat near her.

The Prosecuting Attorney seemed not a man to be influenced by a beautiful face, and appeared determined to make out a case of willful murder against the fair prisoner.

He opened by showing how she had taken hu-

man life one evening, when out riding near her farm home, and seemingly without sufficient provocation.

Then she had kept her act a secret until a poor Jew was nearly sacrificed upon the gallows for the murder, and then, conscience-smitten, she had come to his rescue, confessed her deed, and became a heroine.

The father, Doctor Keene, had died under most suspicious circumstances, and a line left from him stated that he had committed suicide.

Had he done so, or had his daughter gotten rid of him for some purpose?

Moving back into her elegant home, through the generosity of an old rich bachelor uncle, she had become the heiress of that old man, and then, watching her chance, when he was lying ill, and all would believe he had died from the stroke of apoplexy he had received, she had ended his life by giving him poison.

It was said that she had killed him to save her brother, who had gotten into some gambling scrape, and had to have a large sum at once to pay his debts, or be ruined.

It seemed that she could have gotten that money without killing her uncle.

But no, the witness, who had been the maid of the accused, had heard her young mistress talking aloud in her room, and heard her speak of the fortune that was to be hers at the death of her uncle.

She had heard her say many compromising things, and soon after that the uncle was brought to his home suffering with a stroke of apoplexy.

Made a nurse to the sick man, this same maid had, several nights after, seen her mistress come by night into her uncle's room.

She had swept into the room in the semi-darkness, bearing a bottle in her hand.

She had awakened the invalid and administered to him a dose of deadly poison, he believing it to be the medicine which his physician had left for him to take, and so trusting her that he would allow no one else to serve him.

Leaving the fatal bottle behind her, it told the story of her crime, for the good nurse, suspecting no wrong, had not dreaded danger, and only realized what had been done when she found the poor old man dead.

An analysis of the invalid's stomach had shown the poison that was in the bottle, and that bottle had been taken from a medicine-case kept in a luggage-room, to which only the prisoner had the key.

The next morning a package of diamonds had come to her, with a letter, which implied that she had given the jewels to hush up some lawless deed of her brother.

It further went on to prove that she felt, to save the family from some dishonor, through her brother's act, the prisoner had taken the life of her uncle, not expecting, as he was ill, it would be suspected foul play had been done, and, once in possession of his fortune, her inheritance, she could ward off, with her money, the impending blow upon their name.

Such were the charges against poor Cora, as made by the prosecution, and it certainly looked as though she must be guilty.

When witnesses for the defense were brought up, Frank Keene told his story of how he had gotten into trouble for money, and had appealed to his sister, and she had promised to help him out.

His testimony was rather against the prisoner, and he was withdrawn, but under the prosecution's cross-examination he damaged her case greatly.

Alvan Judah was then ordered to the witness-stand, and in his testimony he gave the lie to Cora's having killed the man in the woodland near Oak Ridge Farm, and gave his proofs for so believing.

And more, he said that he would yet produce the man who had killed the one in the woodland, which would at least remove from Miss Keene the slur of having taken human life.

All that he said made a strong impression, and though in the cross-examination they tried to trap him, he turned the laugh on the attorneys every time, and frequently, before he could be checked, threw in evidence of an important character, such as would impeach the character of the nurse, whom he suddenly charged with acting in the pay of some one else.

But, try as they might to have a verdict of not guilty for Cora, they could not accomplish it in the face of all the evidence against her, and the jury, after a few moments' deliberation, brought in a verdict of guilty, with a recommendation to the court for mercy.

Cora Keene received her sentence without the quiver of a muscle, which was that she should be imprisoned for life.

CHAPTER XLI.

ON THE RIGHT TRACK

THE moment that the sentence was passed upon Cora Keene, Alvan Judah arose and left the court-room.

His face was pale, hard and haggard.

As he departed he wrote a line and handed it to Frank Keene.

An hour after, as the young Jew paced his rooms in the Astor House Frank Keene entered.

"You said that you wished to see me here, sir?" he said, in a low tone.

"Yes: sit down."

"Did you speak with your sister after her sentence?"

"Yes, sir."

"What did she say?"

"That she was content to bear the burden put upon her."

"When does she start to prison?"

"At once, I believe."

"And you?"

"I shall go West."

"Have you the money?"

"My sister said she would give me money with which to go and start a ranch out in Nebraska."

"Where will she get it from?"

"She has some money and some personal effects she wished me to dispose of and use the money."

"You will use nothing, for the house and all shall be left as it is."

"I will give you five thousand dollars to go West, where I have some land, and you can buy cattle and start anew in life."

"Should you need more money in your business, write me and I will send it to you."

"I am to take charge of the estate of your late uncle, and will keep you informed as to the course the courts will take regarding it."

"Now, my advice to you, Mr. Keene, is to get out of this city at once, and when you are ready come to me and I will give you full particulars and a draft on a bank in Omaha for the money."

Frank Keene seemed like one walking in a dream.

He was anxious to get away, and the next night departed for the West, bidding Alvan Judah good-by with tears in his eyes and wringing his hand hard as he said:

"You are my only friend."

Two days later Alvan Judah started westward, and his destination was Chicago.

Arriving in that city, he sought up the firm who had been the lawyers of Doctor Austin Travers and held a long conversation with them.

Then the two men who had gone as crew of the yacht when the doctor had accompanied Richard Denmead were found, and a vessel was chartered and they were placed on board with two others and a skipper to man her.

As passengers went Alvan Judah and one of the lawyers.

Straight for the little haven where Denmead and the others left the yacht, the craft sailed, and coming to anchor, a boat was taken and days were passed in searching the shores up and down for leagues.

This resulted in finding a boat at a small hamlet, which the two men asserted was the identical one in which the skipper and his passengers had left the yacht in.

Close inquiry, aided by a liberal giving of gold, caused it to be remembered by a number of people that three men had come there in that boat one night, and that one of them had seemed to be very ill, and his companions said that he was crazy from suffering, as they had been wrecked, and had been for days drifting upon the lake.

Finding that the men had given their boat away and taken passage there in a schooner bound to Duluth, returning to their yacht, the Jewish detective and attorney sailed for Duluth.

They were told that they would doubtless catch the schooner there.

This they were so fortunate as to do, and the captain, in answer to their inquiries, said:

"Ah, yas, gents, I recomembers the three of 'em."

"One was as crazy as a loon, and t'others was mighty kind and good to him, and was with him constant."

"They paid me well for my sarvices, and said ashew they intended ter take the luny to a mad-house."

Finding that the three had taken a hack from Duluth, Alvan Judah dismissed the yacht, and with the attorney hired a vehicle and still kept on the trail.

To St. Paul they tracked them, and there learned that the keepers of the lunatic had taken him to a mad-house in the State of Wisconsin, and which was an institution of a private kind, endowed by some man of wealth.

Thither they went, and upon inquiring of the superintendent were told that he had a young man there who had been brought there nearly a year before, and who was a dangerous lunatic.

He had an idea that he was a physician, and seemed, indeed, to be thoroughly conversant on surgery and medicine, but his keepers told him to beware of him, and that he had been very dangerous in his madness.

"He swears that he is not mad," continued the superintendent, "but has vast wealth in Chicago, and was robbed by his keepers, who pretend that he is a lunatic; but of course we pay no heed to such stories, and his brother, Mr. Denmead, paid us most liberally for the year's care of him, and promised to send us th' second year's pay in advance, and only yesterday I received a letter from him asking what was due and after the health of the patient."

"My dear sir, you have done a great wrong, for that poor patient is just what he says he is, a rich man and a physician, and he was robbed of sixty thousand dollars by his pretended brother."

"Lead us at once to the room of Doctor Travers."

This was done, and a thin, haggard man greeted the visitors, while his eyes dimmed with tears when Alvan Judah told him they had come to save him from a living death.

While Austin Travers returned by easy stages to Chicago with the lawyer, Alvan Judah, with the address of Richard Denmead in his pocket, went to Colorado in search of that worthy.

Inquiry convinced him that a man who called himself Denver Dick was the one he wanted, and the daring Jewish detective mounted a horse and rode out to a ranch where the one he sought dwelt.

It was after nightfall when Alvan Judah approached the ranch.

A bright light was burning within and he heard voices in conversation.

Dismounting, he crept up to the door and listened.

"I tell you, Red, we have got to push back East and try some other game, for we are dead broke," said one voice.

"I don't want to go East, Dick," answered the one addressed.

"Well, what are we to do?"

"I've got an idea we can go back to the asylum, git the doctor out, and make him write a lie to Chicago, send it by you, draw on his lawyers thar for a big sum, and give it to us to let him go."

"He will do it sure! It is the very thing, and after we get the money we will knock him in the head or put a bullet through him."

"That's it, and I'm glad you wrote the letter to see if he is there."

Just then Alvan Judah gave a knock upon the door.

"Who are you?" cried a voice, the door opening a few inches.

"A friend who wants a night's lodging, pard," replied Alvan Judah.

"Are you alone?"

"Yes."

"Come in."

The speaker was not Richard Denmead, but his comrade in crime, while over at a table in a corner sat the man whom Alvan Judah now knew to be the one whose name would answer to the initials "D. D."

As he stepped across the threshold the Jewish detective dealt the burly ruffian who had admitted him a blow in the face that laid him flat upon his back, and placing one foot upon him to hold him there, he leveled his revolver at his companion, and said sternly and in a ringing voice:

"Denver Dick, you are my prisoner."

"Up with your hands or I kill you!"

CHAPTER XLII.

FORCED TO CONFESS.

WE left Judah, the Jew, in a situation of considerable danger, for he had just daringly invaded the cabin of two desperate men and brought them to bay.

He felled the red-headed ruffian who had acted as the yacht's skipper, having had some sea experience, and with his foot upon his throat held him at his mercy, while he covered Richard Denmead with his revolver.

It was a bold thing to do, to risk the chances of one to two; but Alvan Judah knew no such word as fear.

He was determined to, unaided, run his enemy to earth, and he did so.

The man who had called himself Richard Denmead, and then become known on the plains as Denver Dick was a desperado to be dreaded.

He, however, was one who loved life, and at the command of the Jew he raised his hands above his head with alacrity.

"Come here!" was the next order, and Denver Dick obeyed, walking up to his captor.

To disarm him, seize a lariat that hung at his belt and bind him securely was but the work of a minute for the nimble hands of Alvan Judah, who then stooped down and performed a like service for the half-stunned, half-choked ruffian at his feet.

"You know me, sir?" said Alvan Judah, addressing Denver Dick, as he took a seat and gazed upon his prisoners where they sat upon the floor.

A lamp burned upon the table, and the cabin and its furniture were all revealed, and presented little comfort for those who had, a year before, stolen sixty thousand dollars.

"I do not know you," answered Denver Dick, gruffly.

"You know that you speak falsely in saying so."

"Let me refresh your memory."

"We met one night in a roadway in New England, in a woodland where a man was killed one night, and I was nearly hanged as his murderer, but a lady claimed to have done the deed, as he had tried to rob her; but I know that she did not."

"We met again in the grounds of Oak Ridge

Farm, when you attacked me one night, and I made you a prisoner.

"We met again on the highway into New York city one night, when you again attacked me, but you escaped me.

"We now meet again, and if you do not tell the whole truth, you will never meet me or any one else again on this earth.

"Remember, I know that Miss Keene did not kill the man in the woodland, I picked up the papers you dropped in your struggle with me at Oak Ridge Farm, I have your handkerchief, blood-stained, that you wrapped the jewelry in which you robbed Frank Keene of, after you had caused his horse to throw him, and I know that you, and this wretch by your side, inveigled Doctor Travers into a trap, carried him as a madman through the country to a mad-house in Wisconsin, and left him there.

"Knowing all this, I expect you to tell the truth, and if you do not, I will throw this lariat over yonder beam and hang you there.

"Now, sir, I am ready to listen."

"What do I get?"

"Hung if you don't, that is all."

"I want terms."

"As you are stubborn, I will show you that I am in earnest," and quickly making a slip-knot, Judah, the Jew, threw it around the neck of the prisoner, who shouted:

"I'll talk."

"All right; here I have pen, ink and paper, so will write down your confession," and he turned to the table upon which were writing materials.

"Your name?"

"Denver Dick."

"Your real name?"

"Richard Denmead."

"It is not."

"If you know, why do you ask?"

Alvan Judah arose and threw the end of the lariat over the beam, drawing it taut.

"Richard Denver," cried the villain hastily.

"Your handkerchiefs are embroidered 'D. D.'"

"I am called Dick Denver, and Cora Keene embroidered those for me long ago."

"Ah! you knew her, then?"

"Yes, before I went wrong, our families were friends."

"I see; now, sir, why did you kill that man in the woodland that night?"

"To save Cora Keene, for Belden meant to kill her."

"What was his name?"

"Macy Belden; he had gone wrong and was sent to prison, but escaped, and looked me up for a job to get money out of Frank Keene."

"Frank had committed forgery, and Belden and I took up the papers, to hold them over him, and we agreed to go up to Oak Ridge and play them on old Keene, or Cora, and get a big sum for them, and then start West."

"Belden dodged me, and meant to play me false; but I followed him, crept up in the woods, and seeing that the fool meant to kill Cora, I fired just as she did."

"I thought I heard some one coming, so ran off, but watching the road for a long time, and no one passing along, I went back to see if Belden was badly hurt, and to lay for Frank on his way home."

"I met Frank, and his horse threw him, so I robbed him, and then found Belden's body."

"While there, searching for the papers I knew he had, I heard steps and ran off."

"As you were found by the lady and arrested, I let it go that way, and was working to get money from old Keene, when I saw you and attacked you."

"Cora, seeing who I was, and knowing that I held papers against Frank, made a bargain with me for them, and then I found that I had lost them in my struggle with you, so I went to look them up."

"Not finding them, and knowing you were going to New York, I headed you off to kill you and get them, but I missed it, as you know."

"Well, sir, go on."

"I had to raise money some way, so I hit upon the young doctor, and forging an introductory letter from Cora to him, I made his acquaintance, played my game well, and my pard here and myself got a cool sixty thousand out of him, which we have squandered the last dollar of."

"I thank you for your frank confession, and will you read it, as I have written it, and then sign it."

This Dick Denver did, and his comrade then told how he had been taken in, as an ally, and that, as far as he knew the circumstances, the whole truth had been told.

To this he was forced also to sign his name.

Armed with these documents, and mounting his prisoners upon their horses, which were staked out near the cabin, Alvan Judah set off for Denver, arriving there just after daybreak and lodging the two guilty men in jail until he could secure aid in carrying them East.

From Dick Denver, on the way, he learned much about Frank Keene, and how he had used his sister's love for him to get money whenever his gambling debts and extravagances put him in a tight place.

"Now to stop for Doctor Travers, and then ho!

for New York to break the testimony that Cora Keene had killed Macy Belden without provocation, as it was urged against her at the trial.

"This proven by this man, I shall endeavor to show that she is not the murderess a jury found her to be, and get her out of that fearful prison ere her proud heart is broken with despair."

So said Alvan Judah, and he made a vow to take no rest until he had accomplished his purpose in freeing from her life of misery and shame, poor Cora, the Convict.

CHAPTER XLIII.

UNRAVELING A TANGLED PLOT.

IMPROVING rapidly in health, one day Doctor Austin Travers sat in his room at the hotel in Chicago, where he had been a guest since his escape from the lunatic asylum through the act of Alvan Judah.

A knock upon the door he answered with a prompt invitation to enter, and in stepped his lawyer, and accompanying him was Alvan Judah.

Springing to his feet, he warmly greeted the man to whom he owed such deep gratitude, and said:

"Thank Heaven you are back in safety, for I have been greatly worried about you."

"No need for that, Doctor Travers, for I bagged my game!" answered the young Jew.

"You caught my kidnapper?"

"Yes, I found him, or rather them, for I got both, in their ranch, and they were plotting to raise more money by going back and offering you your release for a certain large sum and a pledge not to attempt to hunt them."

"The fiends! but I would have given them any sum to escape from them."

"Oh! when I think how those two men, one playing captain and the other my host, on that yacht, seized me that day in the woods, beat me insensible, and then dragged me by water and land for many long miles, making people believe I was a lunatic, it almost drives me to madness, and I thank Heaven you have them prisoners."

"Yes, I caught them in their den, knocked one down and made the other hands up, after which I tied them and ran them off to Denver, where I got aid in bringing them here, where they are safely lodged in jail," said Alvan Judah, quietly, and the lawyer and Doctor Travers congratulated him upon his fine work.

"You have, I believe, some settled purpose in having hunted this man Denmead to earth?" said Doctor Travers, addressing Judah, the Jew.

"Yes, I desired to prove that he, and not Miss Keene, killed that man in the woodland, near Oak Ridge Farm, and which alleged act of hers was used with such force against her at the trial."

"These things I have proven, as also that her love for her brother was a weakness with her, and to shield him she did all she could do; but she never took the life of her uncle that she might get money for him, and this I will yet prove."

It was a terrible blow to Austin Travers to know the bitter fate that had fallen upon poor Cora, and yet, hearing all the testimony against her, he seemed to feel that she was guilty, and uttered no word of sympathy.

Alvan Judah smiled grimly as the doctor expressed his views, and muttered to himself:

"This is not my way, to desert one I professed to love."

"But so be it."

Taking the train for New York, with the prisoners under the charge of two constables whom Alvan Judah employed to watch them, the party arrived safely and Dick Denver and his wicked comrade were placed in a cell of the Tombs.

Making the tour of his offices, Alvan Judah saw that the manager he had placed in charge had all working well, and then he drove out to call upon Emanuel Gaspar and Murielle.

The former received him cordially, while Murielle was restrained in her manner and very sad, for she had heard that she was not beloved by her idol as she would wish to be.

Having attended to this duty call and related his adventures, Alvan Judah drove at night to the grand home of the Keenes.

It was dark and gloomy-looking, except in one wing where a light glimmered.

He had left in charge of Elsie Hall, the nurse of Mr. Keene and former lady's maid of Cora.

A ring brought her to the door, and her face lighted up with a smile as she saw who her visitor was, for Alvan Judah had ever been most kind to her, and had insisted that she should care for the mansion, and had paid her liberally for so doing, while the coachman looked after the stable, and slept in the mansion as a protector.

"Oh, Mr. Judah, I am so glad to see you back," said Elsie.

"And I am glad to get back, Elsie, for I have had a rough trip of it."

The woman was about twenty years of age with a winning manner about her, having evidently been well-born and reared.

She was attractive-looking, but possessed a cold, heartless face, and looked like one who was ambitious to rise above the position she was

forced to drudge in on her way through the world.

She had the pleasant wing of the grand mansion arranged for herself, and invited Alvan Judah into her sitting-room.

"Have you heard anything, sir, of the poor young lady since she went to prison?" she asked, in a low tone, as the Jewish detective took a seat just opposite to her.

"Yes; I heard to-day, and she bears up with that brave spirit which no one who was guilty could maintain."

"Oh, sir, you do not, after all I saw, believe that Miss Keene is innocent?" cried Elsie, in a tone of horror.

"I know that she is," was the quiet response.

"But you cannot know, sir, for—"

"I repeat, Mrs. Scott—"

The woman turned pale, but said quickly:

"You call me Mrs. Scott, sir, when my name is Elsie Hull."

"Your name was Elsie Hull, but it is now Mrs. Barney Scott."

"Oh, Mr. Judah!"

"Don't get excited, Mrs. Scott, because I happen to have found you out. The fact is, I have been playing you as a tool to gain my ends, and have had you shadowed ever since the day of Mr. Gordon Keene's death. I am aware that you married Frank Keene's intimate, Barney Scott, three years ago, believing him the heir to great wealth."

"When his wild life got him cut off without a dollar, you deserted him, and became a hospital nurse; then, losing your place, in distress one day you met Barney Scott, and he told you that Miss Keene needed a lady's-maid, as the faithful negress who had so long served her had gone South. You applied for the position, and were employed. You occupied a place right where your husband wished you to be, should he desire to make you useful. He saw that a plot for gold might be made between you; but a plot ripened sooner than you anticipated."

"Mr. Keene was taken ill, and knowing you to have been a nurse, Miss Keene placed you in that capacity by the sick man's bed, for she did not like you as a lady's-maid."

"Several nights after his attack, Miss Keene retired, calling you to watch by the bedside of the patient, and to call her when it was time to give him his medicine. You see I have all the particulars up to that moment, and now I wish you to tell me just what you saw."

"I told at the trial all that I saw," said the woman, falteringly.

"You did not."

"I have nothing more to tell," was the dogged reply.

"You have, as I will convince you, when I state that I have here in prison, brought from his hiding-place in Colorado, Dick Denver, the man who killed Macy Belden, whom at the trial it was asserted that Miss Keene killed."

"I have, to produce, if you make it necessary, your husband, Barney Scott, and Frank Keene is just where I can lay my hands upon him as a witness."

"I have here a letter, written by you to Barney Scott, and its contents are entertaining, for it tells him that the courts, without doubt, will give Gordon Keene's estate to Frank Keene as the direct heir, and that then half of it will belong to you and Barney."

"See, here is the letter, and I advise you to tell the truth, or the result will be that it will be forced from others and you will go to a prison cell as the murderess."

The penetrating eyes of the detective never left the face of the woman. She was now deadly pale and seemed to find difficulty in breathing.

"Don't faint, for when you return to consciousness, you will be behind iron bars."

"Oh! what can I do?"

"Confess the truth and let that poor innocent girl suffer no more."

"I dare not."

"Come, I will give you just one minute to begin."

"You can do nothing with me if I do confess."

"I make no promises, but I do say, if you do not confess, that I will brand your character before the world, and show just whose testimony sentenced a pure and lovely girl to prison for life."

"I dare not tell."

"All right, I arrest you as the murderess of Gordon Keene," and Alvan Judah laid his hand heavily upon the woman's shoulder.

CHAPTER XLIV.

A WOMAN'S CONFESSION.

"MERCY! mercy!" screamed the woman, as Alvan Judah, in his deep, stern voice, laid his hand upon her shoulder and made the bold charge that she was the murderess.

"Will you confess?"

"Yes, oh, yes!"

"I will listen, and you must tell the whole truth," and Alvan Judah calmly resumed his seat.

"I will, I will!" moaned the terrified and unhappy woman.

Seeing the eyes upon her, which seemed to hold her under a fascination she could not resist, the woman said:

"I am not the one who killed Mr. Keene, though I saw the poison given him. I was lying in the bay window on the lounge, with the *portières* drawn to keep out the light, and had dropped off to sleep, when I was awakened by the entrance of some one. I remained quiet, saw the person glance around the room cautiously, and then, with a strange bottle clasped in her hand, go to the bed. I of course thought that Miss Keene had come down to give her uncle the medicine, for it was nearly time for it, so said nothing. I saw her wake the gentleman up and administer the medicine.

"It seemed to choke him, so she set the bottle down and gave him some water, and he immediately dropped to sleep, and she stood a moment in waiting.

"Then she came toward the window and saw me.

"She started, turned white and staggered backward, when I sprang to her aid.

"Then, as her face was full in the light of the adjoining room, I discovered to my horror, that it was not Miss Keene."

"Who was it?" asked Alvan Judah, coolly.

"It was her brother."

"Frank Keene?"

"Yes, sir; but he was dressed up in Miss Keene's clothes, and looked strangely like her, only he was much taller, yet stooped to prevent this showing.

"He knew that his uncle would take no medicine except from his sister's hands, and, not fearing detection, or that aught would be suspected, as Mr. Keene was very sick, if he should die, he determined to poison his uncle, that his sister might have his fortune, and that meant half for him. This he told me in an adjoining room, whither he dragged me, and he pledged himself to give me half of what he received. If found out, Miss Keene was to be accused, and then all the inheritance would be his and I would receive half from him.

"Now you have my confession, sir."

"Write it down and sign it, just as you told it to me."

"Why should I?"

"Women are changeable, you know."

"Write it down."

"I will send it to you."

"You will write it now!"

She obeyed, and then the merciless detective said:

"Now pack a sachel for yourself, for you are to go with me."

"Where?"

"To jail."

"Oh God! you said—"

"I made no promises. Get ready, for I am going to take you with me."

An hour after Alvan Judah was on his way West, having safely placed the wicked woman in prison to await his return, for he had gone upon a special mission, which will be unfolded in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XLV.

RETRIBUTION.

In a log cabin in the wilds of the West, several men were seated around a rude table, gambling. They were cowboys, and, with one exception, a wild, reckless set.

That exception was Frank Keene, and though dressed in the garb of the border, he still looked the handsome, refined youth.

He was winning heavily, and his face was flushed both by drink and his success.

"I am in luck, pard," he said, triumphantly, as he won another game.

"That means we hain't," growled one.

"Well, you should play better if you wish to win from me, for though very young, gentlemen, I am an old hand at cards," said Frank.

"You are a young cheat, and I caught you that time, sly as you are."

"Give up that money, boy, or I'll put a bullet inter yer," cried one of the men.

All sprang to their feet, and the man continued:

"Pards, he's got marked cards; I seen him."

"If he hain't, I gives him permission to shoot me."

"Give up that money, boy!"

"I will not."

"Then I takes it," and he sprang toward Frank Keene.

There was a struggle, a pistol-shot, a groan, and a heavy fall.

"Boy, you begun bad and you've ended worse," said the man who had sprang upon him.

"Oh God! you have killed me," groaned the youth.

Before a word more could be said the door opened and in stepped a stranger.

"Gentlemen, is this the cabin of Handsome Frank?"

"It are, and thar he are; but he brought it upon hisself," was the answer.

The new-comer sprang to the side of the dy-

ing youth, and each uttered the name of the other:

"Frank Keene!"

"Judah, the Jew!"

"Frank, you are dying," said the detective, sadly.

"Yes; but I brought it upon myself. Oh, Mr. Judah, I have so much to tell you," groaned the youth.

"I know all, Frank; but I wish you, while you have strength, to sign this confession which I shall read to you."

And he hastily read the confession of Elsie Scott.

"Yes; I will sign it, for I am the one who killed my uncle, and all is true that she says."

He was raised up to the table, a pen was placed in his hand, and he wrote in a firm hand:

"I am dying from a shot I brought upon myself, and I swear that I poisoned my uncle, Gordon Keene, as the woman, Elsie Scott, here confesses."
"FRANK KEENE."

"Gentlemen, kindly sign this paper as witnesses," said Alvan Judah.

The three men, deeply impressed by the scene, hastily did so, and then Alvan Judah placed it in his pocket, and turning to the dying youth did all in his power to relieve his sufferings.

"I dare not ask my sister to forgive me, but I know she will. Tell her my last thought was of her. Good-by, Mr. Judah!"

And the wicked young spendthrift and murderer breathed his last, his hand clasped firmly in that of Judah, the Jew.

CHAPTER XLVI.

CONCLUSION.

ARMED with the confession of Elsie Scott, signed by Frank Keene, and also the one of Dick Denver, that he was the murderer of Macy Belden, Alvan Judah presented himself before the Governor of the State and gave him a *résumé* of the whole story, as the reader now knows it, and asked, not for the pardon, but for the immediate release of the poor girl who had so deeply suffered, and had been forced to wear the name of Cora, the Convict.

The governor was deeply pained at the suffering that had been visited upon one who was innocent, and went with Judah, the Jew, to the prison and at once had her released.

Words cannot picture the scene of joy at her release, or the sorrow that fell upon poor Cora when she knew of the sad ending of her brother; but hers was a brave heart, and she faced with fortitude all that she had to hear.

With no longer the stigma of the convict to brand her, Cora Keene's friends (in name) began to crowd about her, and Austin Travers was among the first to congratulate her and attempted at once to assume the position of *fiancé*.

But Cora Keene coldly informed him that she had never loved him, as she had made known to him at the time of their engagement, and, though sympathizing with him in the sorrows and sufferings he had known, she could only consider him in the future as an acquaintance.

Others, too, were coldly received by the now haughty and defiant girl, and when she returned to Oak Ridge Farm it was with the prayer:

"Lord deliver us from our friends!"

Alvan Judah escorted her to the *dépôt*, and then set to work to prosecute those who had so persecuted the maiden he so dearly loved, and himself.

He was admitted to the New York Bar, and got assigned by the district attorney to prosecute Dick Denver, his comrade in crime, and Elsie Scott, and so thoroughly did he do his duty that the trio went to prison to expiate their crimes.

Having removed this burden from his heart Alvan Judah took the train one night for New England, and his destination was Oak Ridge Farm.

What he said to Cora, upon meeting her, can be surmised by her answer:

"Yes, I love you, and have done so since I saw you, under trial for your life here. You say that you are known as Judah the Jew. Well, I have been called Cora the Convict, and though I am not a Jewess, my Christian friends deserted me in my anguish and danger, and you have been my truest, best friend through all, and to you I now turn for happiness in life, for your people shall be my people, your creed my creed, and your God my God."

And so it happened, for soon after Cora Keene became the wife of Alvan Judah the Jew, and though they were made happy in their love, there was one poor heart that had lost its idol and was doomed to ache on until Time, the great soother of sorrow, should heal the wound of unrequited affection.

That one was Murielle the Jewess; but hers was a noble nature, and accepting the inevitable, she hid the thorn in her side, and with her father went up to Oak Ridge Farm to visit Judah the Jew and his beautiful bride.

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